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[Vol. II]

COURSES OF ADVENT SERMONS

HOLY DAYS IN ADVENT

CHRISTMAS DAY

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

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JAMES MACKENZIE LTD.

LONDON

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**SERMONS, OUTLINES AND ILLUSTRATIONS
FOR SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS**

Courses of Advent Sermons

FIRST COURSE

STRONG FOUNDATIONS—I. Election

Strong Foundations. MICAH iv. 2.

Nevertheless, the Foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. 2 TIMOTHY ii. 19.



HAVE thought that there could not be a more appropriate question—for the First Sunday of the Church's Year—than that with which I wish to meet you to-day—What are your 'Foundations'? On what are you resting your peace, your hope, your soul? Are they 'Strong Foundations'? Are they sufficient to carry the structure?

That we may be better able to answer this question, definitely and satisfactorily, I propose to consider during this Advent those 'Strong Foundations' which God has given us—distinctly and by name—as the base, not of a material system, but of the whole edifice of a Christian's life.

They are plainly set out to us, and they are foursquare. They are these: 'Election; ' 'Christ; ' 'Truth; ' 'Good Works and Alms-deeds.'

These, together, make the one 'Foundation.' We will look at them as they are placed before us, *seriatim*, and in order, on the Four Sundays in Advent. 'Good Works' springing out of 'Truth,'—'Truth' resting on 'Christ,'—'Christ' resting on 'Election.' The four together all one; but each so necessary to the other, that, if you withdraw any, the smallest part, the whole building must fall, for the want of that one stone.

And the power of your religion lies in your 'Foundations.' If you have very humbling recollections of the past year, the fault lies in the 'Foundations.' If you have not stood, when some wind of

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temptation hath blown upon you,—if you have been very deficient in firmness of character,—if you have not settled quietness of mind,—if you have not been a support to others,—if you have not shown a good front, and glorified God,—there hath been something wrong in the ‘Foundations.’

Look to your ‘Foundations,’—first, that they are right; next, that they are sound; next that they are complete. Every good master-builder must look first to this. How can we go on to build this year—as we all hope to do—if we are not sure that our ‘Foundations’ touch rock, and that they all hold together?

Hence my great duty to send you down often to the underground. And when more opportunity than now? Therefore I take it for my Advent subject: ‘Foundations’—‘Strong Foundations.’

This morning, I go to the first stage of ‘Foundations’; and I find it in the nineteenth verse of the second chapter of the Second Epistle to Timothy. ‘Nevertheless, the Foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ On that verse I shall dwell to-day.

It is quite certain that whoever would arrive at a real and a primary ‘Foundation,’ must look for it somewhere in the mind, and the character, and the being of God. How can we find the reason for the Eternal in that which is fleeting? or the argument for that which is Infinite in anything that is finite?

The First Cause for any good thing must be in God. For everything that is was first a thought in the bosom of God. Creation is the act which turns that thought into a visible substance. It was as real while it lay invisible in the purpose of the Almighty. But that we might apprehend it, and enjoy it, it took form and substance.

The will, intention, and resolve of God was its germ, and all that ever develops is simply the expansion of that germ, which lay, from all eternity, in the mind of God.

So it is with our salvation. It began—it existed—it was entire—in the foreknowledge of the Father.

If you ask, ‘Why is any one a Christian?—what security is there that a Christian’s faith will stand?—How does any one get to heaven?’ The answer, the one determining answer, is—‘God willed it—God knew it from everlasting.’

Remember in God’s mind all knowledge is love, and all foreknowledge is election. Therefore the ‘Foundation’ of every one’s salvation is God’s electing love. That electing love put into motion every part of that great machine, till at last it ends in heaven. That sent Christ; that drew the soul to Christ; that kept the soul in Christ; that justified; that sanctified; that glorifies.

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It is all electing love. And if you stand at last at the right hand, and if you sit down in glory, the only reason that you will be able to give,—the final solution of that wonder of wonders, why you were ever in heaven,—will be, ‘God knew me,—God loved me,—God chose me. It is all to the praise of the glory of God’s grace.’

In the Church of Ephesus,—even at that early date,—many had fallen away,—and their declension and perversion had been a stumbling-block to the young bishop, and had disturbed his mind,—therefore S. Paul, writing to him, feels it right to remind him of a first great truth, and to draw a vast discriminating line between what has, and what has not a real ‘Foundation,’ and the real ‘Foundation,’ he says, always has a ‘seal,’ which distinguishes and characterises it. Whatever has not that ‘seal’ may fall away, and will fall away; but the ‘Foundation’ which has the seal will never fall away.

And the ‘seal’ has two sides; the impression is double; and each stamp is essential to its genuineness. ‘Nevertheless’—that beautiful, comforting word, which comes in so often in the Bible for the assurance of believers,—‘Nevertheless,—though all others fail,—‘Nevertheless, the foundation of God.’ Observe, he does not say, Those who were on ‘the Foundation,’ but ‘the Foundation’ itself,—making the ‘Foundation’ everything; ‘the Foundation of God standeth sure.’ That never falls quite down. It may shake, it may fall some way,—but it will never fall to utter ruin. ‘The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’

The ‘Sealed Foundation,’ then, lying down in the depths of eternal ages, on which every Christian’s happiness rests, as its one grand ultimate security, is this: that God is God: that He ‘knew us’ long before we knew Him: that ‘knowing’ He loved, and that loving, He made us ‘His:’ and that ‘His’ are ‘His’ for ever and ever. For ‘the gifts and calling of God are without repentance,’ *i.e.* God never repents the selection of a soul.

And if God does will it, I say, who shall hinder it? Shall Omnipotence fail? Shall Infinite Wisdom not vindicate itself? Can the Fountain of Love ever cease to flow? Hear Christ’s own testimony: ‘They shall *never perish*, neither shall any man,’—there is no ‘man’ in the original,—the beings of all worlds,—‘neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father.’ You see He goes back to ordaining grace: My Father *which gave them Me* is greater than all, ‘greater’ than the whole universe put together: ‘greater’ than all Satanic agencies: ‘greater’ than your poor, wicked heart; ‘greater than all,—and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.’

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Does any one say, 'This is dangerous doctrine! It feeds presumption! It gives licence to sin! If election rules, and election must prevail, then the elected man may live just as he pleases!'

I answer, 'That is your one-sidedness.' See how God anticipates the objection, and provides against abuse. Mark the carefulness; and how exquisitely the balance poises itself.

True, one side is all sovereignty and free grace and absolute election. Turn the 'seal,' and there, as large, as plain, as imperative, I read the signet: 'And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' That there must be holiness, and that holiness must be growing holiness. A man must be always 'departing,'—getting a little further off,—separating himself from his sins,—getting holier and holier.

The 'seal'—the deed—the covenant is one. Divide one from the other, and the whole is null. Neither can exist without its mate or complement. You cannot overcome sin unless you are the subject of God's electing love; and you cannot be the subject of God's electing love unless you are overcoming sin. Election presupposes holiness, and holiness implies election. If you do not find yourself disposed to holiness, you have no reason to believe that you are elected. So S. Peter has well delineated it: 'Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' How inwrought—man's responsibility and God's foreknowledge! How compact—the one 'Foundation!' Grace cementing the good life, and the good life welded into the grace.

Still, the great 'Foundation' of the whole Church in earth and heaven is God's own originating mind, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.' And, O what a 'knowledge' is that! He 'knew' them before they were born: He 'knows' them now: He 'knows' them in their complicated being: He 'knows' their struggles and difficulties: He 'knows' their sorrows and joys: He 'knows' their repentings: He 'knows' the feelings that no one else ever knows. He 'knows' the secret workings of soul: He 'knows' the measure of your love, that you dare not 'know,' and would not believe it, if you did 'know.' He 'knows' 'His'; and, as He 'knows,' He loves. Your knowledge is only the echo of His knowledge; your love is only the reflection of His love. It all springs here; it all resolves itself into this one thing, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.'

There are times when nothing else than this will do. Nothing will give you any comfort or any hope; nothing in yourself, nothing in anything you have ever done,—nothing in any creature: you will find no resting-place for the sole of your foot anywhere but where S. Paul found it, when he said, 'God, who separated me from my

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mother's womb, and called me by His grace.' Your only evidence will lie in the attributes of God; the only 'Foundation' on which you can build a hope—that He is the Lord; that 'He doeth what seemeth to Him good; and that 'the Lord knoweth them that are His.'

I would advise you to take this thought with you, as a first great principle down the path of life. Accept the fact. Do not be afraid to believe that you have a place in election. Has not He given you sufficient proof? Has not His knowledge shown itself to you in the most practical love, in all manner of kind providences, in the inward working of His Spirit, in leadings, and hedgings, and comfortings, and still small voices, almost every hour? The conviction that you are an object of God's choice will never make you proud. Nothing in the whole world will so humble you in the dust.

And it will be a great thing to you when you work with a certainty, and feel under a destiny. It will strengthen your whole character. It will give a holy energy and determination to your mind, which will command ten thousand promises. You will have just what we all want, something sure under your feet, something to work up from, something on which to erect a future, a high future, a worthy future.

You will have a 'Foundation.' The eternal will of the Father that you should be saved now, and that you should live with Him, and that you should be like Him, and that you should serve Him for ever and ever.

I know there are those who will see in this which I have given you as a 'Foundation' of peace, a 'Foundation' of terror and despair. I believe and am quite sure that God meant election to be always a doctrine of comfort.

If any man turn election into reprobation, that man does it at his peril!

To solve the problem, and make the apparent parallels meet, I do not care to try,—I leave it to the higher faculties of a clearer world.

In the meantime, I am content to say with the holy Leighton: 'I would rather stand by the margin of those deep waters and cry, "O the length, and breadth, and depth, and height!" to putting out in the frail bark of human intellect, probably make shipwreck of saith, and of a good conscience.'

J. VAUGHAN,
The Brighton Pulpit, No. 861.

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STRONG FOUNDATIONS—II. Christ.

For other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
1 CORINTHIANS iii. 11.

THE second of those ‘Strong Foundations’—upon which rests the whole fabric of God’s grandest work—lies upon that which we have seen to be the first, viz., ‘election.’ ‘Behold, I lay in Zion, a chief corner-stone, *elect*.’ And there can be no doubt who it was that David saw afar off, when he said, ‘Then Thou spakest in vision to Thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One *chosen* out of the people.’ And Isaiah distinctly describes Him: ‘Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine *Elect*, in whom my soul delighteth.’ So that it was a true word which the ruler said derisively, ‘If He be the Christ, the *chosen* of God.’ Jesus Himself, in His humanity, found comfortable argument with God in that thought: ‘Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.’

Therefore, when we say that ‘we are *chosen* in Christ,’ we say a deeper thing than first meets the eye. For we are ‘chosen’ in One who was Himself ‘chosen.’ And there is a double sense in which salvation springs out of election, seeing that both the Saviour and the saved are alike ‘elect.’

Himself then resting on election, we have, this morning, to view Christ as the second ‘Strong Foundation’ of that great Temple—in which we trust that, through the same election, we, in God’s infinite mercy, have been made ‘living stones.’

Now S. Paul treats this as an indisputable fact, a simple act of all Christian philosophy; for, he says, there may be difference about what is built upon it; it may be very good, or a little good, or partially good: ‘gold, silver, or precious stones;’ or it may be rather perishable,—or very perishable,—or made to perish: ‘wood, hay, or stubble.’ But of the ‘Foundation’ there is no doubt whatever. ‘Other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.’

I should define the ‘Foundation’ to be that from which everything springs, while itself bears all the weight. Just that Christ is to the Church. From Him, all that is beautiful in the whole structure starts; and back to Him every part throws its heft and burden.

So that you are not in God’s building if both those are not true of you,—that you begin everything in Christ; and then you lay upon Christ all your sin and all your care.

When Christ is called a ‘Stone,’ we must remember that the metaphor is liable to create some confusion of thought; for He is not

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always like to the same stone in the building. Sometimes He is 'the Foundation Stone ;' sometimes 'the Head Stone of the Corner.' And those are not the same. The 'Foundation Stone' is the beginning of all, the support of all ; the 'Head Corner Stone' is the top of all, the crown of all, where everything points and centres.

It is in relation to His position as the 'Head Corner Stone' that it is said, 'Whosoever falleth on that Stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.' Evidently having reference to the lofty place of a 'topstone,' on which men, walking after the eastern fashion on the top of the house, might stumble, and which might fall down on any passer-by.

And that makes the contrast the more striking ! 'The Stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the Head of the Corner.'

But when Christ is called 'the Foundation Stone,' it, of course, means that He is 'the First Beginning,' the base of the Church. And it is to this that I believe that Christ referred, when He said to Peter, 'Thou art Peter,'—*Petros*, a 'stone' ;—' and upon this Rock,' *Petra*, this Foundation Stone, Myself, or the noble confession which thou hast made of Myself,—' I will build My Church.'

Of this great fundamental 'Stone,' you may observe that it was not made a 'Foundation' until it had been proved by the terrible test of the world's fiercest fire.

See its history. It was 'cut out,' Daniel tells us, it was 'cut out' of the mountains of eternity 'without hands.' No human touch, no earthly fatherhood, was there.

Then it passed through its tremendous ordeal. To use Isaiah's language, it was 'tried ;'—'tried' by a life of unswerving obedience ; 'tried' by the severest temptations, which were never escaped ; 'tried' by the hardest and heaviest crosses ; 'tried' by all that mortal or fiendish malice could invent against it ; 'tried' by the whole load of a whole world's guilt ; 'tried' by the heavy hand of a smiting God ; 'tried' by the darkness of a black eclipse ; 'tried' by the light of the flames of hell ; 'tried' to the very crushing point of proof.

And then—not till then—being found worthy—adequate to the strain—equal to the vastness of the undertaking and the responsibility, it was 'laid in Zion.' 'Behold, I lay in Zion for a Foundation, a Stone, a Tried Stone, a precious Corner Stone, a sure Foundation: He that believeth shall not make haste ;' *i.e.* shall never be agitated.

And, showing that, in His great sustaining work, Christ is not without the Holy Ghost—(the Three Persons in the Blessed Trinity always being thrown together in every great office)—we have it in Zechariah : 'Behold, the Stone that I have laid before Joshua ; upon

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one Stone shall be Seven Eyes.' The perfect sevenfold work and character of the Holy Ghost being also in the 'Foundation,' a truth to which I may have occasion to go back another time.

But now, we have to look at Jesus only as God's one 'Foundation' of all that is beautiful, and all that is happy, and all that is true, in all worlds.

I should not be wrong if I spoke of Christ as the 'Foundation' of the material world. For He was clearly the first thought in the Great Creator's mind. For His sake, chiefly, this world was made —to be the scene of the display of His exceeding power and love, to the glory of the Father.

He was 'the first-born of every creature.' He was 'the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.' When Adam was 'made in the likeness of God,' Adam's body was formed after the image of that Incarnation of the Son of God, which He wore even then in the purposes of His eternal mind. He was 'the Word, and the Word was with God,' and 'the Word was God.' And 'the Word' created everything. We have it in that beautiful description of Christ in the eighth of Proverbs: when God 'possessed Him in the beginning of His way, before His works of old.' (See Proverbs viii. 23 to 31.)

So that when this world fell to ruin, there was the Eternal Son of God ready, instantly,—ready to be the beginning of a new and better creation. As the promised Messiah who, coming at once before the gate of Eden closed, stayed the hand of universal death; and this earth, and everything that is in it, lived on and on, yet owned Him as its sustaining power; for 'He was before all things, and by Him *all things consist*, *i.e.* hold together.'

After that, all along, underlying the whole Jewish dispensation, every sacrifice, every type, the magnificent temple, in all its parts, there was that expected One, the 'Foundation'-thought of every Jew, in all their rites, in all their prophecies, in all the history of the old dispensation till, in due time, *He* came.

God took the sweetest gem out of His own bosom, to make it the Church's Corner Stone. And the cradle of Bethlehem was the 'Foundation' of a throne before which every throne shall crumble into dust,—of a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.

Of this kingdom of grace and glory—for they are one—the fundamental principle is this: it is threefold: it is the Person of Christ,—it is the Work of Christ,—it is the Glory of Christ.

The Person of Christ,—that He is God and Man; Man, to constitute Him a representative; God, to give efficacy to the representation.

The Work of Christ,—that He paid the debt of the whole world,

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and wrought a righteousness which can make the whole world good in a holy Father's sight.

The Glory of Christ,—that He is occupying heaven for us, and there exercises all regal functions for His people's sake. That is 'the Foundation,'—the Sympathy of Jesus,—the Sufficiency of Jesus,—the Vicarious Death of Jesus,—the Imputed Righteousness of Jesus,—the Mediatorial reign of Jesus,—the Intercession of Jesus,—the Return of Jesus,—the universal empire of Jesus; or, put into other words, the Brotherhood of God,—a perfect pardon for every sinner,—instant peace,—holiness not our own,—the outpouring of the Holy Ghost,—a restored likeness,—a coming rest,—an eternity of God.

For remember, the ground of all religion is covenant. Every covenant must have a base; the base of covenant is Christ,—that Person of Christ,—that Work of Christ,—that Glory of Christ. Therefore, that is 'Foundation.' And 'other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'

But now the great point is, that we look on all these, not as goals which we are to reach, but as starting-points from which we are to set out.

The pardon, the peace, the love of God, the comfort, the hope, the communion, the joy of Advent, I say emphatically—these are all 'Foundations.' Many will tell you that they are not; that they are things which we build up to.

'Build up to!' On what? On what? Can we build without a 'Foundation'? And what is 'Foundation'? Christ. And what is Christ? Pardon, peace, life.

Let me press this upon you more closely. The distinction is very important. What a building would that be, of which we should take the 'foundations' and place them at the top? That building could not stand. Neither will your religion stand, if you invert 'foundations' and 'summits.' The 'summit' is holiness; the 'foundation' is a felt interest in Christ: a finished work, a holy confidence, a sense of property in the promises, that is 'foundation.' That God gives; you have nothing to do with it. You have nothing to do with it but to accept it, and use it as a 'Foundation.'

If you add a pebble of your own to that 'Stone,' the 'Foundation' is destroyed. 'For other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid.' 'Is laid' by God Himself. You must build, but not this. This is built. You must build, but not it. Not to it; not with it; but on it. To 'lay' a 'Foundation' is the attribute of Omnipotence.

Nevertheless, the very word 'Foundation' presupposes superstructure. And with the superstructure you have to do. And the height of the superstructure will be according to the depth or the strength of the 'Foundation.' Therefore, never begin anything in

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the world till you are first sure that you have laid its 'Foundation' in Christ.

For example. The power of prayer lies all in its 'Foundation.' The 'Foundation' of all prayer is the Christ that is in it. We generally place the 'Foundation' of prayer at the end; nevertheless, that name of Jesus Christ, at the close of the prayer, is the whole strength of the prayer. That great 'Amen' is the 'Foundation.'

Realise that Jesus is offering your prayer. Realise that it is made prevalent by His intercession. Realise that whatever you ask in the name of Christ shall be done. Make that 'Foundation' distinct and sure. Then, ask what you like; you may command the answer.

Works are good and acceptable to God just according as they proceed from love,—the love of God. But you cannot love God till you are in Christ. An unforgiven man never really loves God. So Christ is the 'Foundation' of all good works. Good works are sweet evidences, but they are no more. 'Other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'

No doubt we shall be placed in heaven according to our works. But why do we get to heaven at all? What is the far-off first cause? Does any merit bring us there? No. Good works are the pinnacles and the decorations of heavenly architecture: but there is no 'Foundation' in good works. 'Other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'

Is there any one in this church who has not peace? I will tell you why. Because Christ is not in His proper place. He is not laid deep enough in that poor heart of yours. Put Christ deeper, and you will have peace.

Stay yourself on Jesus. Nothing else can bear the weight of that sin of yours. Let it be Jesus,—Jesus always,—and Jesus only.

In the great testing day that will come, all beside is utterly worthless! Go as high as your utmost ambition can carry you. Build yourself into the building. Build thousands. Be yourself the support of many. But let this be your motto:—'Jesus in all, and all in Jesus. Jesus first,—Jesus last,—Jesus everything.' 'For other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'

J. VAUGHAN,
The Brighton Pulpit, No. 862.

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STRONG FOUNDATIONS—III. Truth.

And are built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone. EPHESIANS ii. 20.

A MAN should do with the ‘Foundations’ of his soul, as he does with the ‘foundations’ of his house. He should not be always going down to look at them,—that might make him scrupulously timid; but he should satisfy himself—from time to time—that they are all right; and then he should rest in his confidence that what is underneath him is amply sufficient to bear all the peace, and all the hope, which he is building up upon them. And the fewer questions he asks about them—at other times—the better. The occasional investigation is quite enough.

And it is because the beginning of the Church’s year, and the season when we are all particularly anxious to realise that grand day of inquiry which is coming, appears to me to be a fitting time to do it, that I ask you, this Advent, to examine that fourfold ‘Foundation,’ which we have seen that God has laid for our spiritual Zion.

Two we have already considered. And to-day we have to do with that Third ‘Foundation’—which rests upon Christ, as we have seen Christ to rest upon Election—‘Truth.’

And ‘the Apostles’ and ‘the Prophets’ are ‘Truth,’—the one representing the teaching of the New Testament, the other, of the Old,—dovetailing themselves, as they do, one into another, so that neither would be complete by itself; but the two making one firm body of ‘Truth’;—the ‘Prophets’ furnishing the ground for the ‘Apostles’ faith,—the ‘Apostles’ interpreting and spiritualising the ‘Prophets’ visions.

And this is what we understand that S. Paul meant when he said. ‘Built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone.’ ‘Built’ upon the great ‘foundation’ truths of the teachings of the two covenants,—both springing alike from one Centre Stone,—the Lord Jesus Christ.

You will observe that the historical order, which is the order of time, is inverted, and the ‘Apostles’ are placed before the ‘Prophets.’ And for this reason: because, in the sentence, we are *descending* the ‘Foundation.’ The ‘Apostles’ are laid on the ‘Prophets,’ and the ‘Prophets’ are laid on ‘Christ.’ ‘The Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone.’

So we pass, in fact, from the living, to the Written Word; and we find the strength of the great eternal ‘Rock’ on which we all rest—sustaining the Bible, as the Bible sustains us. The ‘Apostles’ built upon the ‘Prophets,’ and the ‘Prophets’ upon ‘Christ,’—that

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the Three together may make the One consolidated 'Foundation,' which is—Christ in Revelation.

This is the way that our faith touches God. The Bible rests on God, we rest on the Bible: so we reach God.

Take away Christ out of the Bible, and you take away the 'Sun' out of the firmament.

Take away the Bible out of the world, and you take away the medium by which that 'Sun' is visible to human eyes.

We lean on the Bible that we may lean on 'Truth'; and we lean on 'Truth' that we may lean on Christ.

Everything, brethren, everything must have a starting-point. Every science wants its axiom; every system wants its fulcrum; every mind looks about, and says, 'Where am I to begin? Where shall I find a beginning,—that I shall feel it to be perfectly sure and incontrovertible?'

To that question, there is only one answer:—Inspiration,—*Inspiration*. If there is no Inspiration,—there is no moral certainty anywhere. If God has not spoken,—what voice can command belief? Pilate's question must roll on unanswered still; and all nature, and all philosophy can only echo it,—coldly, dismally, hopelessly, mockingly,—'What is Truth?'

Therefore, you will always find that every mind which denies Inspiration runs into a general scepticism!

Have we not all felt, that what we want is an Oracle,—an Infallibility,—a Last Appeal,—a Certainty? Have not all men—in the irresistible force of an instinct—been compelled to seek and find that somewhere? Does not all history,—does not the anatomy of every soul,—show a grasping for some ultimate basis of belief,—some sure foundation for thought? And do you think that He who made that innate longing in His creatures could forbear to satisfy it?

Inspiration is a necessity. It supplements the cravings of all humanity. And, therefore, Inspiration must be a fact.

It will not be out of place if I take occasion to say here to you,—what I often say to those whom I have under instruction—what are the four great proofs of Inspiration.

First, *the presumptive proof*, of which I have been speaking,—that we should expect that, when God has made such a creature as man, He would give to that creature some revelation of Himself,—and if He has, where is it? What book in the whole world but the Bible can pretend to such a claim?

Secondly, *the internal evidence*. The authorship of the books of the Bible spreads over a period of nearly sixteen hundred years. They are written by men of all grades of society, and all orders of mind—in

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many generations,—and yet they all agree. There is one pervading current of thought. How could that agreement be, unless it had been dictated by some one Master-mind? And what could that Master-mind be, but God?

Thirdly, *the external evidence*. This book—from beginning to end—is full of prophecy. We can prove—from profane history—that those prophecies were often hundreds of years before the events which they foretold; and that the events tally with the predictions,—some being fulfilled at this moment, before our own eyes. Could any human mind, unassisted, have done that? Could any but God do that? Then—God wrote the Bible.

Fourthly, *the experimental evidence*. The book exactly fits the heart. It fits it as a key fits a lock. And as we should reason—in any complicated piece of machinery—that if the key fitted into the mechanism, then the key and the mechanism were both contrived by the same person,—so we conclude that this book, fitting, as it does, so strangely into all the wards and all the crevices of man's complicated heart, must proceed from Him who made that heart. I feel it when I read it, whoever made my heart, made that book. The two must have one origin, and that origin must have been God.

The inspiring power—as it came down from heaven—took indeed, in each instance, the colour of the mind which became its medium. But the ray is one—however many the refractions.

And so in all the books of the Bible,—though they carry the characteristics of the individuality of each writer, I still find one God.

Thus, then, I arrive at the firm conviction that 'the Apostles and Prophets' are a 'Sure Foundation' on which to build our Creed and our Salvation, being themselves built on 'the Chief Corner Stone.'

I strongly advise every one of you not to remain satisfied with anything else than a thorough assurance that the Bible is, literally and simply, what it professes to be,—the Word of God.

I believe that this admits of as positive proof as any moral subject can ever furnish or require. There may be difficulties; but they are all difficulties that can be met, and they are not sufficient to affect general truth. A thousand weak objections never make one strong one.

Establish your mind on that first 'Truth';—there is a Revelation, and that Revelation is the Bible.

Perhaps you do not need it to-day; but you may greatly need it to-morrow. Therefore be prepared; and be sure of your 'Foundation.' You can build up nothing without it. But you can build safely—all peace and all holiness and an eternity of happiness—when once you yourself are 'built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone.'

It is a very pleasant and helpful thing to connect the Church of

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the present with the Church of the past and the Church of the future; to realise yourself a part of the long line of that great army which, from age to age, is marching on across this world, to a better land of victory and rest; and to feel:—‘It was but a short time back that “the Apostles, and the Prophets,” and the Martyrs, and the Confessors, were crossing here; but now it is I. We walk in the same track; we listen to the same commanding voice; we step under the same banner; we are saved by the same Truth; we are travelling to the same bourne.’

It is a pleasant thing, and very helpful—to realise and feel that they—who are gone before—had the same conflicts and the same sorrows as we have; and that, leaning on the same staff, we shall get safely through the waters, even as they.

It is a pleasant thing, and very helpful—to look far down the ages that are gone, all along:—from ‘Enoch, the seventh from Adam,’—and ‘Noah, the preacher of righteousness,’—and all the foreseeing Patriarchs, in their illuminated evening hours,—and ‘Moses, that prophet like unto Christ,’—and ‘the holy child Samuel,’—and ‘the sweet Psalmist of Israel,’—and the rapt Elias,—and the evangelic Isaiah,—and the prompt spirit of the earnest Jeremiah,—and the sympathising Ezekiel, that ‘son of man,’ and the prayerful Daniel,—and Zechariah, that ‘son of prophecy,’ and all the twelve minor ones, minor only in their length, but equal in the brightness of their forecasting mind;—down to John the Baptist, ‘the greatest born of woman’ among ‘the Prophets,’ because the nearest to the Great Luminary; and then to gather into our thoughts the whole college of ‘the Apostles’: the glowing Peter,—the bold James and the seraphic John—those ‘sons of thunder,’—the Paul of the single eye and the deep thoughtfulness,—the radiant Stephen, and all those lofty ones, the first followers of the cross; and beyond them still, all the blessed servants of Christ who, from generation to generation,—down to even the horizon of some of our own holiest memories,—have loved and lived the ‘Truth,’ and then sealed it with their deaths: and then to know and feel that, from end to end, it is one grace—one ‘Truth’—one Christ; and their Christ our Christ,—for so we ‘are built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone.’

Thus it is that, from age to age, the Church rears itself—in its beautiful proportions, in every part,—in its compactness and its love-likeness, and its unity and its love.

We get, then, at the ‘Foundation’ of ‘Truth,’ ‘Truth’ in its two-fold strength,—‘Prophetic Truth,’ ‘Apostolic Truth’; ‘Prophetic Truth’ representing the Old Testament,—‘Apostolic Truth’ representing the New Testament,—and both one Christ.

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What is 'Prophetic Truth'? Taken in its broad outline, it is this: the affairs, the destinies of this world all under the One Watchful Eye, and the One Superintending Hand, of Almighty God. To Him all time is one unbroken *now*. The future, as present and as real as the past. His mind the chart, of which the history of this earth is the copy. Each event developing itself in its appointed time; but all foreknown and pre-ordained by Him who 'orders all things after the counsel of His own will,' for His people's good, and for the glory of His own great Name,—that is 'Prophecy.'

And 'Apostolic Truth' is this. This world has been the scene of a great mission. Christ, the Son of God, has been here, and He hath been careful to extend and perpetuate the knowledge of His mission, and all its benefits, by missionaries, whom He hath sent to all the world. And this is the mission. He came to this world—because it was unhappy—that He might make it a happy world. He came to pay the whole great debt of a world's sin,—and He paid it to the uttermost farthing. The debt is cancelled to every sinner who accepts the bond:—the attributes of God all harmonise themselves into one pure beam of love:—heaven is opened to the universe:—there is one universal 'Come and welcome' to every creature:—guilt is buried;—wrath is sheathed; condemnation is passed;—death is dead;—separation is over;—life is risen life, a resurrection-life that will never die again.

All 'Truth' is the expansion of Jesus. It develops in 'Prophecy'; it culminates in 'Apostleship.'

Heaven on holiness;—holiness on peace;—peace on pardon;—but all on Jesus. Good Works on faith;—faith on promises;—promises on Truth;—but all on Jesus. Saints on ministers,—ministers on 'Apostles,'—Apostles on 'Prophets';—but all on Jesus.

And the same great fact will repeat itself before your eyes, for ever, when you come to see the glorious perfections of the finished Church, pinnacled in glory.

Hear the testimony of the Apocalypse:—

'He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel; on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city'—mark the words—'the wall of the city had Twelve Foundations, and in them the names of the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb,'—that it might stand for ever and

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for ever, 'built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone.'

J. VAUGHAN,
The Brighton Pulpit, No. 863.

STRONG FOUNDATIONS—IV. Good Works.

That they do good, that they be rich in Good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a Good Foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 1 TIMOTHY vi. 18, 19.

IT would be a great abuse of the doctrine of Divine Grace, if we were to say that God is not more pleased with the man who leads a good, useful life, than with one who spends a bad or a negligent one. But then—with all we know and believe of God's free way of salvation,—and all which we have been seeing of those grand fundamental things—'Election,' and 'Christ,' and 'Truth,'—it is very difficult to understand,—not how 'Good Works' can have a place,—but how a 'Good Work' can be a 'Foundation,' in the Christian scheme. Are they not rather the upper stages than the basement of God's building? And yet the text says—as plainly as words can speak,—that 'Good Works' are a 'Foundation.' It does more: it uses an expression which occurs nowhere else: other things are styled a 'Foundation,' but 'Works' are called a 'Good Foundation.'

It is to show how 'Good Works' are a 'Foundation' that we shall be occupied this morning. But remember that 'Good Works' are only a part of the 'Foundation.' Underneath 'Good Works' lies 'Truth'; underneath 'Truth' lies 'Christ'; underneath 'Christ' lies 'Election.' Each must range in its place and order.

Before I go on, let me point out this to you. When S. Paul—guiding the ministry of Timothy, 'his dear son in the faith,' at Ephesus,—directed him to tell his people that they should 'do good,' and that they should be 'rich in Good Works,' the two lessons are not the same. The original word—though we have given the same translation—is not the same in the two clauses. 'To do good' is to be kind, and to benefit our fellow-creatures: it is a relative word. 'To do Good Works' is positive: it is to do what is in itself right, and fair, and beautiful.

It is true that it is almost impossible to think of any 'Good Work' which is not also a work of usefulness. They are practically identical. Still, the exact meaning of what God teaches us here, in its full compass, is to be kind, and to be abundant in noble actions: 'To do good, and to be rich in Good Works.'

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To judge what are 'Good Works,' we must look at them from God's point of view, and see them as He sees them. And certainly they are not 'Good' in His sight, unless they have Him in them; and the more they have Him in them, the more 'Good' they will be. They must come from Him—as their source; they must be done in Him—as their strength; they must point to Him—as their end and object.

So that, in fact, the 'Foundation' of 'Good Works' includes, and pre-supposes, and requires, every other part of the fourfold 'Foundation.' For it is not really a 'Good Work' unless it be done from the love of God,—you cannot love God unless you are forgiven,—you cannot be forgiven until you are in Christ,—and you cannot be in Christ till God draws you. So the 'Foundation' holds together in its quadruple force, and is one. 'Good Works,'—'Truth,'—'Christ,'—'Election.'

But we must consider, more accurately, how 'Good Works' come into the 'Foundation.' Now though, as our *Thirteenth Article* tells us, we must not say, 'Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of His Spirit, are pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (to use the old expression) deserve grace of congruity,'—nevertheless, it is quite certain that they who, by acting well, live up to the light they have, will have more light given them, and 'if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine,' i.e. he shall have spiritual understanding; and most assuredly it was an argument, of which Christ admitted the full force, even in a heathen man,—'He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue'; and Christ looked lovingly on a young man, who had 'kept all the commandments from his youth'; and it is placed almost as cause and effect, why Cornelius had the vision which led to his conversion, that he was 'a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, and gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.' So that 'Good Works' are a 'Foundation' on which God Himself is pleased to build.

The real history of the case, no doubt, is this: that there was grace working in the man before he did the action, or had a thought about it. But, practically, I should not fear to say to any man—however far off from God that man might be—'Go, and give up your sins, and lead a good moral life, and do good to other people. That will be using the measure of grace that you now have (and every man has some); and you will be in the right and sure road to higher and better things.' And in this sense, that man would be literally and truly 'laying up in store for himself a Good Foundation against the time to come, that he might lay hold on eternal life.' For his 'Good

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Works' will lead on to more spiritual knowledge, and to other gifts of grace.

And now let us look at it in rather a different way. What is the 'Foundation' of a man's peace? Christ—and Christ's Finished Work. Only Christ; and only a Work quite Finished. But can a man tell and be sure that he has Christ, and that Finished Work? Yes. By his 'Works.' I do not say that if he is living a good life, he may be safe to infer that he is in Christ; but I say, that if he is not living a good life, he is quite safe to conclude that he is not in Christ. Therefore his 'Works'—to a great extent—are the warrant of his assurance.

But look a little further. S. Paul and S. James appear to contradict each other on the subject of the 'Foundation' of a man's salvation. S. Paul says, 'A man is justified without works, by Christ only.' S. James says, that 'by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.' The reconciliation lies in the different senses of the word 'justified.' A man is 'justified' before God,—*i.e.* he is accounted righteous, pardoned and accepted,—only by his faith in the death and merits of Jesus Christ. What 'justifies' his claim that he is 'justified'? What 'justifies' him to himself, and the world, in believing and saying that God has forgiven him? His 'Works.' 'He is justified by his Works' in believing and saying that he is 'justified by faith.' And in this view of the case, his 'Works' are a 'Foundation' of his peace. The man has something tangible on which to rest his hope that he has an interest in the promises of God.

This is a very delicate subject, and requires accurate thinking, and nice discrimination. The best, and most loving, and purest action—which the holiest saint on earth ever did—had so much shortcoming, and so much alloy in it, that itself needed forgiveness. It can set up no plea whatsoever. It is in itself condemning. It is only the Christ that is in it that can give it any merit at all.

But where is a man to find an argument on which to convince himself that he is a child of God?

Do you say, 'The Spirit will bear witness with his spirit that he is a child of God'? True; but it is very difficult to be sure about that 'witness of the Spirit,'—at least at all times.

Will his own feelings tell him? Yes; but there is an immense risk there; and many have made (and some fatal) mistakes about their feelings. It is an exceedingly difficult thing to examine a feeling.

Where, then, is the ultimate ground of confidence? Certainly in the character of God,—in the Word of God,—in the Work of Jesus Christ. All our real evidences are there.

But is the soul to find no confirmation anywhere else? Is there nothing in himself to show it? Now hear what God says: 'We

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know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.' 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.' 'He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me.' The man who is in Christ can say: 'I am not what I ought to be,—I am not what I wish to be,—I am not what I hope to be,—but, I am not what I was. There was a time when I neither did,—nor cared to do,—nor should have liked to do,—nor could do,—what I do now. There has been a change; and the "Work" proves the change.' And so the 'Works' are, in their measure and degree, a 'Foundation' by which he 'lays hold'—observe that word, not *makes*,—by which he 'lays hold on eternal life.'

The distinction is an important one. No 'Works' make anything; but 'Works' help us to grasp what has been made. The image is thought to be of a drowning man clutching a plank. He 'lays hold on eternal life.'

With this view agrees the history of the judgment-day. For, of that great Advent, what will be the basis of the Judge's sentence? 'Works'; 'Works' of love. No doubt the love will be the subject of the inquiry, more than the deeds of love; but the deeds of love will stand up in witness as the fruits of love—'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world—for ye ministered to Me in Mine.' 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, for ye did not minister to Me in Mine.'

The 'Works' are the base. And thus they who have done 'Good Works,' and been 'rich' in them, they will then find—though they never knew it before—that they have 'laid up in store for themselves a Good Foundation' against that most solemn hour,—'that they may lay hold on eternal life.'

And even beyond the grave, our 'Good Works' will meet us again in another world. With some men, 'they go before'; with some men, 'they follow after.' And they will be the rule of the distribution of the heavenly places in that glory, of which, nevertheless, the glory is that all its glory is of grace. Else what does that mean:—'the ten cities' to 'the ten talents' well used; 'the five cities' to 'the five talents' well used? or that, 'Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven'? or that, 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations'? That is, By your 'Good Works and Alms Deeds' 'make friends' of those worldly possessions, which else are your enemies; that, when the great bankruptcy of this world comes on, and it is all broken up, your money—(represented by the people

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to whom your money has done good—physically and spiritually)—may be there, to receive you, and welcome you in another world.

The fact is that every action done for God,—every bit of money you ever give for Christ's sake,—every kind word you say,—every kind look you give,—passes on to the other side. It is deposited in God's bank, and you will find it when you come to cross over.

And, if these things be so, may we not say that the 'Good Works' which God has done in us, in this world, go to that higher state, not only to be the themes of the songs, but to be the very 'Foundations' of the thrones of all the saints?

And you may carry on that thought, with truth and safety, one step further, and believe that every 'Good Work' we do here is the beginning and the germ of a series of the same, or the like 'Good Works' which we shall carry on for ever. So that, as in a building, we measure the value of each stone—not by its size, but by what it leads up to and supports—in like manner little things, however small, become great in connection with their habits and powers in another state,—of which those small acts were the 'Foundation,' done long ago in us, and by us, by the one God of the grace and the glory.

It is a matter, as it appears to me, though difficult, yet of great moment and comfort—that we should accustom ourselves to regard 'Good Works'—as I have endeavoured to sketch them—as 'Foundations'; 'Foundations' resting on much deeper things below, but still 'Foundations'—here, of spiritual knowledge, and of the peace of assurance; and hereafter of the great award, in the last tribunal, of our position each one among the ranges of the blessed, and of the habits and enjoyment of eternity.

The inference is plain. Do you wish to consolidate your 'Foundation'? Do all the 'Good Works' you can. Look about, at this moment, what kindness you can show to any one,—what duty you could take in hand,—what good you could be doing for God. And the 'Good Work' will strengthen the 'Foundation'—just as superincumbent stones fix and confirm the corner-stone.

And, whether you are to die rich or poor, resolve this, 'I will die rich in Good Works.'

We are fallen upon days which sift the 'foundation' of all things. Many of 'the foundations of the earth are out of course.' And some give signs that they are ready to pass away.

But the Fourfold 'Foundation' of the Christian life—welded into one—can never perish. 'Election' holds 'Christ';—'Christ' holds 'Truth'; 'Truth' holds 'Good Works'; and 'Good Works' hold Salvation.

Take away any part,—and the whole falls to the ground. 'Election' is essential to 'Christ'; 'Christ' is essential to 'Truth';

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‘Truth’ is essential to ‘Good Works’; and ‘Good Works’ are essential to Heaven.

But let the four be rightly ‘laid’ together—in their true order,—as the Great Architect has planned them,—and on that base of adamant there is no height of Divine beauty, or of moral greatness, which may not be reared for the Glory of God.

And, amidst the shocks of time,—and the wrath of men,—and the malice of fiends,—and the roll of ages,—that ‘Foundation’—firm as the God who made it,—will stand for ever!

J. VAUGHAN,
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SECOND COURSE

I. Life without Christ.

Without Christ. EPHESIANS ii. 12.



PROPOSE, this Advent, to consider four subjects: Life *without* Christ,—Life *in* Christ,—Life *for* Christ,—and Life *with* Christ.

And on this day, on which we begin to frame our minds to welcome His coming, it cannot be inappropriate to think what would have been the state of things if Christ had never come; or, which is practically the same thing, What is the condition of that man who, though Christ has come, is none the better for His coming?

For the way to appreciate a blessing is to lose one. And the time to know the real value of anything is when we are feeling the want of it.

We shall be, therefore, in the straight road of preparation for His coming, if we spend a little time in reflecting what this world would have been,—or what is the real position of any living man—without ‘Christ.’

Now, there is a sense in which neither this world, nor any one in it, ever was ‘without Christ.’ For He was ‘the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world’ for it, and all its inhabitants. That is, it was in the mind and counsel of God from all eternity, that Christ should, in due time, come and die for us. The antidote was prepared before the bane; and the remedy anticipated the evil. Therefore, as soon as ever sin came in, God could point to the approaching Saviour; and the promise stood an accomplished fact. And the consequence

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was that this world did not at once go into ruin; and the sinner did not die in the moment that he ate the forbidden fruit.

It was the far-off Advent which prevented, at the moment of the fall, everything from going back into its chaos, and allowed the world to go on.

To use S. Paul's expression to the Colossians: 'By Christ all things *consist*': *i.e.* By Christ all things *hold together*.' And we owe it to Him that our creation is not dissolved.

Then, all along, through the ante-Mosaic and the Jewish dispensation, the expectation and the faith in the coming Messiah—expressed chiefly by sacrifice—made it as though He were already come.

There was pardon and life—to every one who believed—for the sake of Christ, whom they dimly saw in His faint foreshadowings.

And now—since His coming—it would be impossible to calculate how much every man and woman born into this world may, unconsciously, owe to Christ. There is a latitude of meaning by which even the heathen are not 'without Christ.' I believe that the death of Jesus Christ has cancelled the condemnation passed, for Adam's sake, upon all our race. The entail—not of the fallen nature, for that continues—but the entail of the actual sentence of death laid upon our first parents, and on all of us, for their sake,—is cut off.

How can we otherwise understand the words, 'As in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive'; or, 'As by the offence of one, judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One, the free gift came upon *all men* unto justification of life'? The 'all' in the one clause must be the 'all' in the other. So that no man, as I believe, ever perishes because of Adam's sin. And if any man is condemned, it is on account of his own transgressions, and his own unbelief.

And if, as S. Paul reasons in the Epistle to the Romans, if those who 'have not the law are their own law,' and will be judged at last 'by their own conscience,'—and if, therefore, a really conscientious man, who never heard of Christ, may yet be saved,—and if, as we all know, no one can go to heaven but by Christ, then there may be now those in heaven who never knew, till they came there, the Saviour, to whom yet they owe all their happiness.

And it is beyond all compute and conception, what may be the indirect benefits,—the refracted rays of truth and right feeling,—which may reach all over this earth, to those who never heard of Christ or His Advent. What traditions,—what reports,—what untraceable influences,—there may be, even to the heathen! So that we may take our Lord's words literally: 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all men* unto Me.'

And amongst ourselves there is, probably, at this moment not one

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—however wicked—who has not had convictions which, though he knows it not, he owes to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that, perhaps, we may be safe in saying, There is no part of creation which is, literally and actually, ‘without Christ.’

And this makes it the more sad that any one should be found who does not know, and does not love that Saviour; to whom we all, consciously or unconsciously, owe so much every day of our lives.

But I have to do now with the man who, having no love to Christ, and no interest in Christ, is, practically, and indeed as far as he is concerned, ‘without Christ in the world.’

The greatest event by far in the history of our world was the visit of Christ. At infinite cost the Father sent Him; and at infinite cost the Son came, and lived, and died. From that moment everything upon this earth measures itself by its relation to the cross.

Could it be otherwise? For He was ‘the Son of God.’ What must that man be to God the Father, who treats that death of His dear Son as he would treat a mere matter of business? What must he be to God, in whose heart that Son has no real place?

To that Son ‘all power is given in heaven and earth.’ He rules God’s empire with a delegated sovereignty,—to legislate,—to bestow all gifts,—to judge,—to condemn,—or to acquit.

Then, what is the position of that man who, in that ‘King of kings’ has no part;—to whom he feels no loyalty,—and who has in that court no friend?

But let me follow it more particularly. We may say of the man who is ‘without Christ,’ that that man stands before God *just as he is in himself*, and nothing else. There is nothing to better him; there is nothing to excuse him. He must be taken and treated just for what he is.

There is nothing to palliate or extenuate a fault. There is nothing to add any righteousness to amend. He must be judged, and be for ever, according to what his own heart and his own life are. There can be no heaven for him except there be fitness; and there can be no pardon except there be a claim. Otherwise, justice must have its due.

Now, how would the best of us like to be dealt with on that principle? Who could bear it? To stand before God in your real individual character! No Intercessor to plead for you! No blood to cleanse you! No robe to cover you! No refuge to fly to!

Why, the very holiest deed that was ever done upon this earth would not bear it! the best prayer could not stand that scrutiny! The motive was not perfectly pure: the act was not all that it ought to have been. It was not done simply for the glory of God.

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And then all our sins:—the sins of childhood,—the sins of youth,—the sins of our maturer years;—all we have done, and all we have left undone: all our untruthfulness,—all our tempers,—all our idle words,—all our passions,—all our lusts,—all our selfishness,—all our pride,—all our unkindness: oh! if they should be all there, and nothing to wash them! and nothing to hide them! and nothing to plead for them! What an awful examination! what a sweeping condemnation! what a withering curse there would be! And that is the man '*without Christ*'! Himself—himself alone—himself only—himself just what he is—before a holy God, and a perfectly just tribunal!

And consider this. A man '*without Christ*' has no motive, no motive sufficient to rule his life. The motive, the only secure and effective motive of life, is love. No other motive stands. No other motive is strong enough to move the vast machinery of a man's moral being.

But you cannot love God unless you believe that God has pardoned you. You cannot love an angry God. But there is no pardon out of Christ. It would not be equitable—it would interfere with God's moral government—to pardon by an arbitrary act of mercy which would be no mercy. Law must be vindicated: justice must be satisfied. Therefore, only those who are '*in Christ*' can love God. But, out of Christ, there can be no love because there is no forgiveness. So Christ makes the motive of life; and a man '*without Christ*' must be motiveless.

Let me add another thing. All nature looks out for sympathy. Sympathy, in a degree, God has given to every man; but perfect sympathy belongs to Christ. It is His unapproachable prerogative. Therefore, if you do not know Christ, really know Him, as a believer knows Him, you do not yet know what sympathy can mean; for the rest is all very well, but it will stand you in very little stead in some dark hour. But that sympathy is perfect. You cannot find any one else who has been, and who can be '*touched with the feeling of your infirmity*': always tender; always capable; always wise. true to every fibre of your being; matching all its cravings. That is not given to any creature upon earth. That is Jesus. And if you are without Jesus, you are without sympathy.

And yet beyond that. Those who are '*Christ's*' have always in Him—in every place and at every time—a living presence:—not the less real because it is not seen. A God in trouble! They feel Him at their side; they are conscious of His smile: they hear His voice. They tell Him their secrets; He tells them His secrets: they confide in Him; He confides in them. And they are in complete accord.

Oh! how can all that be if there is no Christ? Can the world give it? Have you found it in the world? Can the Church give

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it you? Have you found it in any Christian? Why do so many yearn for the fellowship of a kindred mind, for a companionship of affection, that they might be understood, and that they might be loved? They are 'without Christ!' 'They are without Christ!'

The lives of many persons are going wrong, because they have no model. They cannot copy the light and foolish and giddy people of the world. And when they look at Christians, they see so many weaknesses and inconsistencies, they cannot copy them. There is a Model, a Model perfect; and yet which a man can imitate, because it is the Model of a Man.

It is a great thing to have a model always before the mind's eye. It is what we want. But some of you have it not—because you are 'without Christ.'

I look around me, and I see such a restless world. How few of you are quite at rest! You go from one little excitement to another little excitement, and you find satisfaction nowhere. What you want is *Jesus*. You will never find it till you find it there. You may write upon all that restlessness of the world—'Without Christ!' 'Without Christ!'

I am speaking to *Christless souls*. At this moment it is very likely that some of you do not feel any want of Christ. You are well in health; you are in the heyday of life; you have many things to amuse you, and many things to occupy you. You have no particular feeling of sin, and eternity stands a long way off.

Any moment all that may be changed; any moment the Spirit of God may breathe into you, and your sins might come so heavy upon your soul, that it would be an intolerable load! Any moment you might begin to feel very depressed, and you can scarcely say why. Or any moment you may be shut up into one room, and all your doors of pleasure and business might be closed, and you might be thrown in upon yourself; and many and strange thoughts, and fears, and temptations, and dark suggestions, might come and haunt you on that bed, and through those long nights! And what then? *What then?*—if you are 'without Christ' there?

And when that lonely passage comes, which is to take you out into the unknown, *we must all die alone*. What if there be no arm,—no companionship,—no sweet voice to say, 'I am with you!' No finished work! No Jesus in the valley! No Jesus at the gate! *What will it be to die 'without Christ'?* An awful thing! And the more awful the less you feel it!

It is a little matter, a very little matter, for it is only for a time, to be without money,—or to be without friends,—or to be without health,—or to be without the whole world—but *do not be 'without Christ.'* That is *for ever and ever!*

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And *why* be ‘without Christ’? ‘Lo, He comes!’ He is near; very near! He stands at the door! He knocks! He says, ‘Open! Open! Open! Let Me in, and I will come in,—and I will dwell with you,—and I will never leave you,—and I will fill every chasm,—and I will take away every fear,—and I will set all things right,—and you shall be *Mine* for ever and ever!’

J. VAUGHAN,
The Brighton Pulpit, No. 974.

A Life In Christ

In Christ. 2 CORINTHIANS xii. 2.

IT is a wonderful transition which we make, this morning, from those words of cold, utter desolation, ‘without Christ,’ to all the warmth and all the union of ‘in Christ.’ But the difference in the words is not to be compared with the contrast between the acts.

The expression—though it often occurs in the New Testament—is not easy to be understood—‘In Christ!’ How can one person be *in* another? It is one of those truths which take us altogether out of the range of all common thought. It is a great spiritual mystery.

I should quite despair of making it intelligible to any one who was not taught of God, and who had not an experience of Divine things. I am not sure that all of you will understand me this morning.

It is so very deep, and so unlike all our ordinary ideas. There is no real parallel to it. Images and words can only approximate it, and dimly shadow it.

Yet it is a great fact,—the greatest fact in the history of man. And thousands, who could not explain it, have it, and feel it, and enjoy it, and live by it; and could rise up now and say: ‘It is *my* all.’

The Christ which we all of us know, is a Christ, the Son of God, who became Man, and lived a perfect life on this earth, with great privations, and sufferings, and reproaches; in patience; and after He had spoken many wise and beautiful words, and done many wonderful miracles of love, died a horrid death, rose from His grave, established His Church, and went to heaven again, living to pray for us.

And many could go a step further, and see and recognise Him—in that suffering and death—a Substitute, and in that glory a Representative. That is to say, they acknowledge and believe that when He died, He died in our place, that we might not die, or be punished; and that, in His happiness and glory in heaven, He occupies a place for His people, and represents them till they come.

And so far they understand that we are ‘*in Christ*’ as a man is in

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his substitute, who pays his debt, and suffers the punishment for him ; or as a man is in his representative, who stands for him till he comes, and occupies his place, and is a pledge of his future possession. So a Christian is '*in Christ*.'

And if this were all, it would be an immense boon. Then, if I believed it indeed, my sins are already punished ; and I shall never suffer, never die for them, for I am in my Substitute. And, if I believe it indeed, I am as sure of going to heaven as though I were there. I am there,—for I am in my Representative.

This is not all. Under both these views, Christ is a distinct Being from us. He has done something for me, that I may not do it ; and He enjoys something for me, that I may enjoy it. Still, He is *without* me, and apart from me.

But the reality is much more than this. We must now go up for it into a higher region of pure faith.

There is a great mystical 'body' or 'system,' which Christ so pervades and fills, that you may say 'Christ is it, and it is Christ.' That 'body,' or 'system,' is *the Church*,—the real, inner, living Church, made up of souls who are saved. We call it 'the body,' or 'system,' for want of a better word ; but it is altogether invisible and spiritual. And every one, as he becomes a Christian, has his place in that spiritual system. He is united to Christ ; and he is a very part of Christ.

We approach this deep mystery chiefly by two illustrations, which often repeat themselves in the Bible.

The one is *the human frame*. All the members of the human frame are in the head. They meet there. They live there. They take their motion there. They cannot have a separate life. And while that head lives, and their union with it lives, they live, and no longer. It lives in them, and they live in it.

Another image is *a tree*. The root, is the eternal love of the Father ; the tree, is Christ ; the sap, is the Holy Spirit ; the branch, is the believer. Again, the union is the life. The branch is the tree, and the tree is the branch ; and the sap, which is in both, is the oneness and the life of both. And only as there is oneness, and in proportion as there is that oneness, so is the life, the vigour, the beauty, and the fruit.

So, by types of nature, we get near, but we only get near, to the grand antitype of grace.

We have the twofold expression—of 'Christ in us' and 'we in Christ.' And we may take the 'Christ in us' to be the one inward power of holiness which we have, and the 'we in Christ' to be our clothing in the righteousness of Christ, which is our justification, and our acceptance with God.

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If we make this distinction, we must be careful not to confound the 'Christ in us' with the work of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in us. Our sanctification is the office of the Holy Ghost. But there is a 'Christ in us' besides, over and above, the work of the Holy Spirit in us. And one of the works of the Holy Ghost in us is to make us feel, and know that 'Christ' is 'in us'!

But perhaps the real intention of the two expressions—of 'Christ in us' and 'we in Christ'—is not to make this distinction at all; but only as with double force to declare our perfect and entire union with Christ—mutual and inseparable,—'we in Christ,' and 'Christ in us'!

We are to believe, then, that if we have the faith to accept it, we are so completely united with Christ, that God Himself sees us as one—'accepted in the Beloved.'

Do you understand it? Do not pray to understand it. It is impossible. But pray earnestly that you may have grace to know it, and to feel it.

Christ is in you as the life-blood is in the members. He moves and directs you as the head guides the limbs. His mind and His spirit pervades you, as a man's moral and intellectual being pervades his spiritual being. And you—all your cares and all your sorrows—pass to Christ,—just as the nerves go up and meet in the brain. And no less your joys—for they are His joys. What Christ did, it is as though you did it. What Christ suffered, it is as though you suffered it. You died in and with Him on the cross. You descended with Him into hell. Death and hell are things of the past to you, and they can never be repeated to you. And your righteousness—poor, vile, wicked sinner as you are,—your righteousness is as spotless before God as His own immaculate Son. So you stand now; so you will stand at the day of judgment. Men and angels will see you: Satan will see you: God will see you: not a separate being—'*in Christ.*' And therefore where Christ is, you cannot but be. What can separate you? '*Your life is hid with Christ in God.*'

But as I say this, all words, all thoughts, fail to reach the height of that great mystery—a 'life in Christ.'

Therefore we are above angels,—for they are *with* Christ: they are not '*in Christ.*' Therefore we are restored to more than we lost—for we are like God—in His image: not as Adam was,—but because we are '*in Christ.*' Therefore we are 'sons of God,'—not as Adam was, but because we are *in 'the Son.'* Therefore we shall not be ashamed in the judgment—because we present Christ as us, and us as Christ. And therefore we can stand in the holy presence of God,—because, found '*in Christ*' in grace, we shall be found '*in Christ*' in glory.

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Oh the safety of that 'life in Christ.' How can they perish who are 'in Christ'? Can Christ fail? Can Christ die? Can Christ be lost? When you are assaulted by the wicked one, it is not you that are attacked, it is Christ. It is not you he wishes to hurt: it is Christ. It is not you who fight, it is Christ in you.

When you pray, Christ prays in you. Can Christ be unanswered? When you do anything, there is an inward life behind the action. When you are alone, you are not alone, for Christ is much more than with you. When you die, you cannot die, for you are one with Him who lifts up His hand to heaven, and says, 'I live for ever!' You are risen in the Risen One. And if He reigns, you must reign for ever. God cannot but love you; God cannot but have you,—near Him, and with Him. *Could He put away His Son?*

And don't you see that, in that man who is 'in Christ,' there is an inner life, which is independent of all outward circumstances? It may be all changing about him; but that life does not change. It may be all sad and dark in the outer world; but that life cannot be touched. It is so secret; so secure!

And its purity and its brightness shine out in the man's walk of holiness and charity. And men will catch glimpses of the Christ that is in him.

Do I say then there will be no painful feeling of sin,—no infirmities,—no distresses,—no struggles,—no falls,—to the 'life in Christ'? Nay, many more than any other life. But what I say is this—*the life is sure*, for it is '*the* life.' It is the life of a Man, and it is the life of God.

And therefore your peace is one,—because your peace is your union with Christ's peace; and this is what He meant when He left a legacy as a Man, and made the gift as God: 'Peace I leave with you; *My peace I give unto you.*'

And when you stand before God at last, you have your answer ready: 'True, Lord; I am vile; I am sin; but Thou hast said it, "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus;" and, by Thine infinite grace, I am there.'

Meanwhile, let your life be always at its happiest,—a 'life in Christ.' It is so much happier to owe it to Him than to have it as an independent possession.

And, in heaven itself,—through that eternal life of love and gladness,—the joy will be to feel: 'It is not my glory, it is not my life. I owe it all to Him. *My life in heaven is my life in Christ!*'

J. VAUGHAN,
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III Life for Christ

For Christ. PHILIPPIANS iii. 7.

THE life which we owe *to* Christ, and which we hold *in* Christ, we are bound, by the strongest claims, to use *for* Christ.

And I employ advisedly the expression 'use.' For life is a thing to be used. I would advise every one, sometimes, to stand a little apart from his own life, and to look at it from a distance, as if it was another man's life, regarding it as a thing separate from himself; which is intrusted to him; which he holds,—for which he is responsible,—which he is to use.

And if you once admit that your life—in every sense in which you can really call it 'life'—was, at one time, because of your sins, justly forfeited; and that Christ bought it back for you by His death,—and that every moment you are living it by virtue of your connection with Him,—then *that* 'life,' in love, and honour, and in very fact, is more Christlike than yours, and you would hold it upon false pretences, if you used it in any other way but 'for Christ.'

And when I say 'for Christ,' there are two ways in which we might understand the expression. It may mean—'in order to obtain Christ,'—as when S. Paul says, 'What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him.' He is speaking of the final enjoyment of Christ. Or, it may mean 'for Christ's sake,' because we have Him, and because we love Him; as when Christ says, 'For My sake.'

It is in the latter sense that we take it this morning. Life *for* Christ we have; and we must be *in* Christ before we can live *for* Christ.

Now a man may live what he may think, and what many would call, a very good and even a religious life; he may have a natural tendency to it: or, a conscientious feeling may lead him to it; but all the while it may fall short of this—that it is not 'for Christ.' He does not act for the love of Christ; or if at all, the motive is diluted by many other worldly motives, and very feeble; while God measures everything by the loving standard of the one motive—'*Was it for Christ?*'

And no wonder! for, if it be a real fact that Christ has been to this world, and done all we believe Him to have done, and suffered all we believe Him to have suffered, it is clear that the whole history of men must, from that time, circulate around that Advent; and that the criterion of everything would be, How it stands related to that vast transaction? It is God's quest of all His creatures. And we are not surprised that, in the last account, which we shall render to

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God, the crucial point will be: ‘Was it, “Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me”?’

The ‘life’ therefore, however amiable, or however upright, which is not distinctly ‘for Christ,’ fails in the one condition which makes that ‘life’ pleasing to God.

But now if, being ‘in Christ,’ you wish to live *for* Him, to whom you feel that your being belongs of very right, and whom you so love that a life not given to Him would be to you no life at all, we have to consider what is that ‘life for Christ’? How shall we render it?

And first, let me remark that this ‘life for Christ’ must not be an uncertain thing, taken up and laid down again at pleasure, by fits and starts; sometimes remembered, and sometimes forgotten; but must be the result of a deep conviction, and an ever-present thought,—a ruling affection,—an underlying principle in everything,—alike the smallest and the greatest.

Now to this end,—to secure it from chance and capriciousness, and to stamp it with constancy, and give it its true dignity,—you would do well, in the most express and solemn way you can, to dedicate your ‘life’ to Christ.

I would advise you, on your knees, to consecrate your whole self—‘body, soul, and spirit,’—once and for ever,—to be not yours, but His.

Lay it, like a sacrifice, upon the altar. Do it with the most earnest helplessness. Make it as real as you possibly can. Seal it with some special fervency of prayer; and, as soon as you can, put upon it the Holy Communion.

Do everything you can to give it an indelible stamp, and to invest it with all the sacredness of a holy vow and an irrevocable pledge.

Renew that act of self-dedication at not very long intervals. And if, in the interim, between those acts of dedication, you have been greatly mortified and humbled by failures, and breakings of your vow, do not be discouraged, but make it again with fresh affection.

Christ’s sacrifice for us, being infinite, was once for all, and cannot be repeated. Our self-immolation for Him being finite, and miserably poor, must be reiterated thousands and thousands of times.

From that time, that you have felt and confessed that your ‘life’ is only worth the living as you live ‘for Christ,’ you must write it upon everything you have, and everything you are,—your body and your soul; your time, your talents, your property, your joys, your sorrows, your friendships, your pleasures, your business, your family, your home,—‘*for Christ*,’ ‘A thing reserved, to be used for the pur-chaser.’ ‘Given back to Him I love best.’ ‘*For Christ!*’

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This done, to guide us how to live 'for Christ,' I know no better rule than to study how *He* lived for us, seeing His life was one pure unselfishness.

Perhaps the most selfish part of life is its *sorrows*. It is so very difficult when we are in pain, or in suffering, or affliction, to think of anything beyond our own trouble. We become so absorbed with our own feelings.

Christ's never was a selfish sorrow. It was always sorrow for another's sorrow; or sympathy with another's sorrow; or sorrow in the place of another's sorrow.

If you would 'live for Christ,' you must specially live for Him in that which makes up to you, as it did to Him, a great part of the sum of life,—its *trials*.

When you are in some heavy bodily or mental distress,—and quite as much when you are going through the discipline of little daily friction, think thus: 'I will sanctify this suffering, and ennable it, by bearing it "for Christ." He bore it much more than me; and these are "the marks of the Lord Jesus" now laid upon me. I will show Him how much I love Him by how well I bear them. He shall see His own patient suffering image in me. I will turn it to some account whereby I can glory. Blessed passion! which brings Him near to me, and me near to Him. I will make it light, I will make it joy, by enduring it for Him: My pain shall be the language of my affection. It shall be service—it shall be sacrifice—"for Christ."'

Or, say you are very happy. Take this thought; reason thus: 'Christ is happy that I am happy; and I am happier to think that Christ's happiness is in my happiness, than even that I myself should be happy.'

Or thus: 'My Saviour is a happy Saviour now; and His happiness, which is ever before the throne of God, reflects and ministers to the happiness of His Father. So shall mine. I will be happy as my Lord is happy. I will join my happiness with His; and both together shall glorify God.'

Or thus: 'My happiness shall not fail to make some other person happy. So I will extend that kingdom which is joy and peace. I owe all my happiness to Christ's humiliation; I will devote it all to Christ's glory.'

A life for Christ must be a life of ministry.

I cannot count that person to be 'living for Christ,' who could sit by, and let a word be said to Christ's dishonour, without a challenge!

I cannot count that person to 'be living for Christ,' who is not continually thinking: 'What can I say, and what can I do for Christ? How can I protect or extend His honour?'

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I cannot count that person to be 'living for Christ,' who has not some positive work in hand, which he is doing distinctly 'for Christ.'

You cannot really love, and not be trying to make others love; and you cannot serve, unless there is some definite act of service.

The general feeling may be all right—'I am a Christian! I wish to be useful!' but it is worth very very little! It comes to nothing if there is not some actual self-denying, laborious thing, which you have taken up, and which you are doing regularly, and systematically and faithfully—'for Christ.'

What are you here for? To prepare for eternity? To get to heaven? Yes. But suppose you have secured your eternal life (and if you have not yet secured your eternal life, do not call your life 'life') but if you have, what is your life for? To alleviate the sorrows of the world you live in: to do good: to make others happy, as God has made you happy: to tell of Christ: to bring to Christ: to make Christ dear to others: to give Him this one satisfaction—'to see of the travail of His own soul' in your salvation, and in the salvation of many: to serve Him who served you even unto death.

In the battle of life men must be able to take note of you that you have taken your stand on the Lord's side upon everything; that, whatever others are, you are 'for Christ.' And there must be a sweetness and a modesty, a humility, a gentleness and a love in you, by which the ointment of His own dear Person in you may bewray itself.

Have you ever felt the wish that when you come to die, you might do good by your death; and that, in some sense, you might 'lay down your life for the brethren'?

It is a right and noble ambition to wish to make your death a *mission*. And I can imagine that it would be an immense comfort to think of it in a dying hour. I would advise every one to pray for it, to practise for that very thing: when he comes to die that he may die usefully; that he may die honourably; that he may die for Christ.

Need I say that if you would do all this: if you would suffer for Christ,—and rejoice for Christ,—and serve for Christ, and testify for Christ,—and die for Christ,—Christ must be something more to you than He is to most people; something more than a history: He must be your own dear personal Saviour, Brother, Friend; one whom you know by much intimate intercourse: to whom you stand in the fondest relations; to whom you love to feel you are indebted for what can never be repaid; to whom you tell all your secrets: who is Himself in the warmest secracies of your heart; and of whom you are always saying to yourself: 'My dear Lord! I am His, and He is mine.'

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I do not doubt that I am speaking to many who feel ashamed of the selfishness, and narrowness, and unsatisfactoriness of the life they are living; and wish very much that they could elevate their life, and take it out of its littleness, and out of its unworthiness; and make it a truer and better thing to live.

You will never do it by trying to throw self out: you will never do it by trying to change your character. You must substitute something. You must bring in a new object. You must set the spring of another motive. You must put Christ in His proper place. It is not one among many,—it is the *only* way of doing it. If you would elevate life to its true level, you must ‘live for Christ.’

Then see the consequences. Life, touching Him at every point, will take something of His virtue, of His sweetness, of His power, of His peace. It will have found its resting-place. And, if everything is in proportion as its fulfils the end of its existence, you will live indeed when you ‘live for Christ.’

‘Live while you live !’ the epicure will say,
‘But seize the pleasure of the passing day.’
‘Live while you live !’ the Christian preacher cries,
‘And give to God each moment as it flies.’
Lord ! in my view let both united be,
I live to pleasure while I live to Thee.

J. VAUGHAN,
The Brighton Pulpit, No. 976.

IV. Life with Christ.

With Christ. PHILIPPIANS i. 23.

IF we wish to know more fully than any of us have yet attained to know what it is to be ‘with Christ,’ its nature and its preciousness,—we must ask Enoch; or Moses, who was so conscious of its indispensable necessity, that, without it, he would rather stay in the desert than go on even to the land of promise: ‘If Thy Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence’: that true, unhesitating echo to God’s own large undertaking, ‘My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.’ And remember that the Presence of God, to the people in the wilderness, was the Presence of ‘the Angel of the Covenant,’ that is, Christ.

Or, we would ask those three young men what they found in the sevenfold furnace. Or, many a one since, who, passing through the fires, or the deep waters, has realised the sufficiency of that one grand word, ‘I will be with thee.’ Or, those who were with Him on the mount, when ‘they beheld His excellent glory.’ Or, S. Paul, and all the holy martyrs and confessors, who could forget all their sorrows

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and their anguish, and find their triumph in the one thought, that they were suffering 'with Christ.'

Or, we might go up a step higher, and we might let them speak, who find their blessedness in heaven in the single fact, that they are 'with Christ.'

Or, you might go to Bethany, and hear the accents of our dear Lord, when He reserved it as the very last present to His Church—the dearest and the best—'Lo ! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.'

Is it too much to say that, if we could fulfil this one condition,—have Christ with us always,—the whole of life would be one Sabbath walk to Emmaus, and our hearts would 'burn within us,' from the cradle to the grave ?

But the Presence of Christ is the climax and the far-end of all that is wanted. He came to this world that He might die ; and He died that He might rise ; and He rose that He might live ; and He lives that He might be with His people. And therefore the felt Presence of a living Saviour is the height of the atonement, and the furthest good to man.

Now, we are not to confound the Presence of Christ with the Indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Of course they are inseparable ; and they can scarcely be distinguished even in thought. You can never sever the Trinity. If One of the Blessed Three, then all. But He who has the Spirit within him, will have also, besides, a Christ with him. And that Christ with him is as real,—if we have faith in Him, more real,—than any form, or any substance, which ever presented itself to the outward senses.

The office of the Holy Spirit in this matter is to reveal that Presence and Person of Christ (without the Holy Spirit, no one can know or feel Him), and to enoble us for that sweet intercourse, and those blessed confidences, which that Presence gives.

For it is a marvellous thing, if we think of it, and utterly beyond all natural comprehension, that the Son of God,—that greatest, and most powerful, and loveliest, and holiest, and kindest Being in the universe—all full of sympathy, love, and grace—Himself God—should be actually *with us*, though hidden from the eye ; *with us*, night and day, and for no other purpose than to do us good ! It is so inconceivably grand, that we cannot soar to touch it ! It is so infinitely good that it seems too good to be true ! And yet, if words are not mockers, what did that last promise mean,—Lo ! He Himself saw it a matter of great wonder and admiration : 'Lo ! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world ?' or that positive under aking —'I will never leave thee' ; 'thee,' not the Church collectively ; 'thee,' the singular number : 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee' ?

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Are there degrees of this Presence? Do we have it sometimes more than at others? We can hardly say that. But there are degrees of the sense of the enjoyment of the Presence. And the measure depends on the revelation which the Holy Spirit gives us; and that revelation depends upon the extent to which we are obeying, and honouring, and cherishing the Holy Spirit within us. The sense, not the fact, of the Presence of Christ is the reward of holiness.

But now the great question meets us, How do we obtain this Presence? And on what conditions do we hold it?

And, first, I would say that we can scarcely claim that we do obtain it at all, for it is always beforehand with us; and He comes to us of His own free, anticipatory love and favour, or ever we had a desire or a thought for Him.

When was Christ *not* with His people? What means that magnificent passage in the eighth of Proverbs, where Wisdom, personating Christ, says: 'When He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then was I by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of His earth; and my delights were with the sons of men'? *Before a man was made!* Or that, 'When thou wast under the fig-tree,'—whenever that may be, whether, when he was hidden as a little babe from Herod's persecution, as the legend runs; or whether he was engaged in some act of secret prayer: 'when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee'? Or that encouragement of S. Paul concerning Corinth, before there were any converts there: 'I have much people in this city'? Surely we were in the mind of Christ, and He was with us, long before we awoke to the dawn of the consciousness of our vast possession!

Nevertheless, we must inquire practically—what is our part, what have we to do, to co-operate with the eternal love of God, concerning the presence with us of His dear Son?

And first, there must be *agreement*. 'For how can two walk together, except they be agreed?' Agreement implies two things. You must be in a state of reconciliation and union; and you must be in harmony as to the principle upon which you act and the end which you pursue.

Now as respects the *reconciliation*. That Christ has done. It is all finished by His death. You have only to accept it. You believe it, and it is yours.

But as respects the oneness of aim and object, the two cannot 'walk together' long except they meet upon the same point. You must remember that Christ's one purpose of ambition, during His whole life, was the glory of the Father. He always had it in view,

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and He went straight to it. And if you would be 'with Christ,' and walk 'with Christ,' here or for ever, you must have settled it, once and for ever, well with yourself—what you are living for. It must be for God. Not for yourself,—not for the world,—not for any little thing,—but for God. 'I live for Him, "whose I am, and whom I serve." I live for the glory of the Father.'

Then, agreement of reconciliation by His death, and the agreement of unity of purpose, being settled, you may start upon your walk 'with Christ.'

This once settled, there will be little difficulty about the rest. The great secret, after that, will be *realisation*; and that which grows out of *realisation*,—confidence.

To realise such a thing as the presence of Christ is not an act of the intellect, nor even of the affections,—it is the gift of God. No one can understand it but those who have it; and none can get it but those who receive it from God Himself. But believe it, and you have it.

And what is it? Not an influence; not an emanation; not an abstraction; but a Person, *a Person*; and that Person is with you, and you with Him.

He is a Man! He has a countenance! He looks at you! He smiles at you! He listens to you! He speaks to you! You can tell, as well as Peter told, when He is pleased, and when He is grieved! He is, sometimes, a little way off; sometimes, a long way off; sometimes, quite close. That depends on you. To the eye of faith, He is holding your hand, and you lean upon His breast. He carries you in His arms; and the more, the rougher the way! In your sorrows, He mourns for them; He takes them; He bears them; He neutralises them; He turns them into joys. And in your joys, He enhances them; He doubles them; He makes them safe; He makes them holy; He eternalises them.

His sympathy becomes a power, without which life would not be life,—His Presence, a necessity to you.

While you, on your part, you get the habit of telling Him everything, as to a Brother at your side. You need no other to whom to confide your secrets: you need no other to whom to confess your sins. Why should you?

As you go, you go following, as every one must go who walks with Him. And you see footsteps: and you tread in their prints; and as you tread, He is 'your arm every morning.' You press on His love, and the more heavily you press, the better He is pleased.

You go to sleep, and the last thing you see is Christ. And you wake up in the morning, and He is there.

You hear still voices, and you recognise His accent:—'It is I; be

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not afraid!' 'Fear thou not, for I am with thee.' 'I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.' 'He is near that justifieth me: who will contend with me?'

Now it is easy to see what an independence, what a satisfaction, what a rest they have reached, who can thus find their all in that which, alone of all things in the world, can never go away, and never change: meeting them every instant; fitting into every circumstance; filling the heart, and matching with the infinities, of which we are conscious, within our immortality.

You can hardly conceive—if you have never felt it—what a few moments spent with Christ *quite alone*—without any abstraction whatsoever—can do! How it will smooth a ruffle! How it will elevate a depressed feeling! How it will purify a wrong passion! And how, when you come down, 'men will take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus.'

God says it seven times—'With Christ!' It is pleasanter to say, 'I am with Christ!' than to say, 'Christ is with me!' Just as 'My beloved is mine!' is not so good as 'I am His!' For 'Christ is with me!' makes me the centre, and the centre may fail; but it is far happier and surer to make Him the centre: 'I am with Christ.' That Centre will never fail.

As life goes on, there is a tendency, in most of us, to narrow in our circle, and to seek and wish the friendships that we have, and those we love, to be few. And, as it goes on further, the few grow fewer and fewer still. It is not a wrong feeling; it is in accordance with God's own plan. Friends do grow fewer; they must grow fewer every day; and they will go on, and they will grow fewer, and fewer, and fewer, till there is *only One*. With that One—that One alone—we shall presently have to go and take our long last journey.

The pageant of life is like that grand display upon the mount of transfiguration. It lasts a little while, and it is very bright. And then it all passes away into darkness; and now, as then, 'Jesus is found alone': alone, but enough; and, as He felt to His Father, we feel to Him. 'You may all go, and leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, for Christ is with me.'

And that same law will obtain for ever.

We owe life '*to Christ*': we hold life '*in Christ*'; we occupy life '*for Christ*'; and life's place, for ever, is '*with Christ*'.

S. Paul held the balances of the present and the future life; and the scales hung very evenly in his hands; but the one thought, which he put over-against all the joys, and all the affections, and all the usefulness of this present life, was:—not the rest, not the felicity, not the glory, not the fellowships of heaven,—but the single fact—'*with Christ*.' And on that single fact he wrote, 'Far better!' '*Far better!*'

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And so Christ Himself felt: 'I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also.'

And this was S. John's beatific vision of the blessed: 'They follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.'

There, as here,—the all in all—without which heaven itself would be no heaven,—is—'with Christ!'

And if it is all to us, is it less to Him? Is the joy only ours? If it is a dear thing to me to be 'with Christ,' it is a dear thing to my Lord to have me with Him!

What was 'the joy set before Him, for which He endured the Cross, and despised the shame'? To have His people in heaven. Why did 'the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die'? That it might not be alone.

It is a wonderful thought—that it is my life to be 'with Christ'! But, it is more wonderful than all,—it is Christ's life to be *with me*!

J. VAUGHAN,
The Brighton Pulpit, No. 977.

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The Coming of the Bridegroom

I.

S. MATTHEW XXV. 1.

I.



HE Lord likens the relation between Himself and His Church to that of marriage. And do not let us, because this likeness is very frequently used by Him, and of Him, in the other Scriptures, pass it over as matter of course, or lose its full significance here. The figure, as we are elsewhere told, signifies to us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church, *i.e.* the union in spirit, and in a region beyond the ordinary thoughts and conceptions of men. This intimate and blessed accord and oneness is represented to us as being not yet fully accomplished; we are waiting for its accomplishment, when the Bridegroom of our souls shall return to claim us, and we shall begin an eternal life of ineffable bliss in His glorious presence. And inasmuch as all who are His, who have loved and obeyed Him, are one in Him, and inasmuch as the great day of His return will be one and the same for them all, the day is represented to us as the full accomplishment of His

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marriage to His Church. With reference specially to that day, He is the Bridegroom, she the Bride; and that day is the wedding-day, and its feast the marriage supper of the Lamb. For that day the Bride, the Church, the aggregate of all the sons who are betrothed and espoused to Christ, is represented as evermore during His absence preparing herself.

II. The ten virgins took their lamps and *went forth* to meet the bridegroom,—went forth into the night. It might be cold, it might be stormy; dark it certainly was, but they went forth. The crowd would gather, insolent remarks might be made, but they went forth. And so it is again with every member of Christ's Church; to every member that is worthy to be called one at all. His whole course is a going forth, as holy Paul was so fond of calling it,—it is a walk, and he is a pilgrim. He goes forth to meet the bridegroom. Even as Christian, in the grandest of allegories, with which we are all familiar, went forth from the City of Destruction.

III. *For what* have the ten virgins gone forth? Not for a journey without an aim, but to meet the bridegroom. (1) First, it is a definite object. They knew him who was the centre of the night festival, and he knew them. And so it is too in the kingdom of heaven. One is the Bridegroom, and one only. Ask the angels, and they know Him. Ask the powers of nature—they know Him; the winds and the seas were hushed at His word, and the sun veiled his face at His passion. Ask the sons of men—the glorious company of the apostles praise Him; the holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Him. He is the desire of heaven and earth; all nature groans to see Him; every step in what we call history; all the boasted advances of men in knowledge and in power, all are but the preparation of His way, under whose feet all things shall be placed in the end. If we had gone forth to meet Him, there is no doubt about the aim of our journey. (2) It is a glorious object. He is the Bridegroom of the Church. (3) It is a final object. He who is on this journey never need turn aside.

H. ALFORD,
Advent Sermons, p. 99.

II.

And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. MATTHEW XXV. 2-4.

I. **L**ET us look first at these ten virgins as they go forth. All are alike. In the circumstances of the parable, as gathered by the rule of ordinary life, we may conceive of them as dressed alike, ornamented alike, with lamps probably of the same showing and pattern. We have no right to say that any one of them was

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unworthy of the position which she occupied, as for instance, that she was indifferent to the occasion, or if we choose to go into the deeper significance of the parable, unfaithful to the bridegroom. And in that interpretation, too, we have no right, as was so often done, to say that they are not all alike—earnest, God-fearing, Christ-loving members of His Church: no right to charge any among them with hypocrisy or want of earnestness. The distinction is not one of earnestness, not one of godliness, not one of singleness of purpose. Nor is it again of the great and small ability, or of little and much knowledge. The word *wise* here is not used in its intellectual but in its practical sense, meaning provident or prudent. Some of them were improvident, some were provident.

II. In what was this folly shown? Wherein did the improvident differ from the prudent? All took their lamps—all went forth into the night with their lamps burning. Up to this time there was no visible difference. But the foolish had forgotten that their lamps might need replenishing. They were burning brightly when they went forth; doubtless they would continue thus to burn. I do not mean to say that they reasoned thus, the mischief was that they did not reason at all. Prosperity in the present was to them security for the future. But what did the others? As we saw before, it was not so much that they were abler, of a higher order, more pious, more faithful; but they were more thoughtful. They took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Who knows, they said within themselves, what may occur before the bridegroom comes?

III. Now, then, what is the distinction in the interpretation of the parable? Is it not this? That whereas this flame of divine life within needs continual feeding and ministering to, this is just that for which the foolish make no provision—imagining that the flame, once lighted, will burn on for ever; or fancying that a Christian education, or a knowledge of divine truth, will suffice, without diligence given to minister nourishment to the spiritual life; whereas the prudent, the wise, take oil in their vessels with their lamps, are ever conscious to feed and provide for the light within by all available means; look to the future, and not only to the past and the present.

Day by day, hour by hour, the Holy Spirit is waiting to feed the flame within the members of Christ—not one day in the week, not one building in a parish alone, not by one look alone, not by the voice of a man in the pulpit alone, but by springs bursting up and flowing over our common life, is He ready to supply our vessels with the holy oil of His grace. And the difference again between foolish Christians and wise Christians is plain and palpable here. Doubtless in the streets through which the bridesmaids went

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there were places where they might have hurried unto those that sold, and have bought a supply of the oil which they had missed taking at first, but they had no mind for such an act of care ; it never occurred to them, or if it did, they put the thought by and performed it not. And even so it is in ordinary life. There are those who, from every day's events, from God's ordinary mercies and judgments, are ever gathering nourishment for the life within, strengthening holy purposes, combating sinful propensities, seeing Him whom to know is life eternal ; and there are those again who gather no food at all for their life of good from such things, who heed them no more than the beast of the field heeds the landscape. Set one man down to a trouble or an illness, and though the flame of good purpose and holy life may be flickering before, he will come out of it burning brightly and steadily, the vessel full of oil, the lamp trimmed ; but carry another man through the same, and he shall come out no way affected except with a sort of thankfulness, which is more than half selfish, with resolutions unstrengthened, temper unsubdued, the inner life stricken by the wind of tempest without being refreshed by its rain.

So that all life through, not only in reference to great ordinances or important undertakings, we have this difference between Christians. There are evermore and everywhere the foolish and the wise, the improvident and the prudent, and, even irrespective of immense results which we are to see follow from the difference, even at this stage of our consideration of the parable, there is no difficulty surely in seeing how unworthy the imprudence is of our heavenly calling, how absolutely, and always demanded by it, is the wise and prudent provision.

H. ALFORD,
Advent Sermons, p. 121.

III.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. S. MATTHEW xxv. 5-9.

I. **T**HE bridegroom tarried. And what did these ten meanwhile ? They all slumbered (literally, *nodded*) and slept. What do these words imply ? It has not been quite agreed among expositors. Are they to be understood as conveying blame, or as expressing a matter of course ? I believe we may easily find the solution in the words, 'What more natural ?' It is that very circumstance which is brought before us for our instruction. That it is so, shows us the imperfection of our nature ; shows us our inability to fulfil the strict requirements of Christian watchfulness. Observe, *all* were thus affected ; not the improvident and careless only, but the wise and prudent also. And even so it is with us. We

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all, of all characters and temperaments, are lax, and remiss, and careless, as compared with any, even moderate, standard of vigilance during the Bridegroom's delay. So there is necessarily a general blame of human infirmity conveyed in these words. At the same time there is also a measure of consolation in them. All allowance is given, by the just Judge, by the sympathising Saviour, for our infirmities. And therefore we must not be too much disengaged at finding ourselves overcome by the weakness of our nature ; nor again may we be, either as ministers or as private Christians, more exacting from others than He is, to whom they will have to give account.

The attitude of every Church on earth ought to be humility, ought to be self-distrust, ought to be an abstinence from self-laudation and lofty desires.

II. 'At midnight there was a cry made.' He came when He was least looked for, when sleep was at the deepest. And even thus is it with regard to Christ's coming to the individual. That Advent is something so unexpected, although long expected, that even to the most watchful it is an awakening to a strange fact of the sudden presence. A man may be sick for years, and yet the hour when first he knows he has to die is a surprise to him ; a passing abruptly into a new sense of an awful reality. At midnight will the cry be made to each of us. And is not the same true of the whole Church ? Long centuries has she been waiting for her Lord ; and yet her waiting is all like a slumber, and the note of His coming will be to her, wherever and however it comes, like the midnight cry.

III. The cry sounded round them, and they sprung up from their slumber. Then all those virgins arose—there was not one whom the cry had not awakened. But they part ; the prudent, to meet the bridegroom, even now close upon them ; the improvident, to do at last, in the hurry and uncertainty of the moment, what ought to have been done long before ; what their own lightness, and carelessness, and feeling of security, stood in the way of their caring for at the outset.

We have here represented what often takes place in the experience of life : the earnest and agonised attempt to make up for lost time and opportunities which follows on spiritual alarm ; the eager resolves on beds of dangerous sickness, the softening of the hard worldly heart under bitter bereavement, the melting away of the compacted fabric of unbelief before the approaching fire of God's presence.

H. ALFORD,
Advent Sermons, p. 143.

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IV.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came. S. MATTHEW XXV. 10-13.

WE left the band of virgins divided; the wise had supplied their lamps with oil and were gone to meet the bridegroom, now at hand; the improvident had gone to buy oil to keep their lamps from going out. But the great question is, Is there time? Can the process of buying for themselves be gone through in a moment? Will not the bridegroom have arrived before they return? Will the fainting soul, out of the habit of prayer, ignorant of Scripture, unused to feed on Christ in His Supper, be able to recover the lamp before it is summoned away?

I. ‘While they went to buy, the bridegroom came.’ There are moments that are worth more than years. We cannot help it; there is no proportion between spaces of time in importance nor in value. A stray thought of five minutes may contain the event of a life. And this all-important moment, this moment disproportionate to all other moments, who can tell when it will be upon us? What a lesson to have our resources for meeting it available and at hand! This in the parable was a moment of that kind, one to which all these ten had long looked forward: it came—but it came to these foolish ones just when they were away and had no part in it. They might have gone and bought oil twenty times over while the bridegroom tarried, and they slumbered and slept; but they just went now, and lost Him for ever. There is a time too late to seek what all must find before they can see God.

II. What can be more hopeless than the condition in which the foolish find themselves on their return? But they are represented in the parable as making, at all events, the attempt to enter. They stand in the night, in the darkness outside, of which the Lord often speaks elsewhere; they come and knock and say, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us.’ But they, by their absence at the one decisive moment, forfeited their place among the ranks of the bridesmaids. The improvident ones had no part in all the joy. When earthly remorse overtakes us, see what manner of men we are; selfish men, vain men, self-deceiving men. The earliest pang is eased by a thousand excuses; the dull blinding mist of disappointment is lighted up by a hundred tapers of self-esteem; and the weight of the irrevocable past is lightened for us by the necessity of keeping up good appearances before men. And then if all else fail, there is Time, which rounds off all piercing edges, and decorates every ruin with flowers; and last of all, there is hope, which, in spite of every resolve not to hope, springs up all around, and summons us to action. But what will it be when every

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one of these alleviations is swept away, when all is valued at its true price, self is seen through, human opinion is a dream fled for ever, hope has ceased to be, and the future is a mere reflection of the past? 'Therefore,' says the Lord of our spirits and of the Lord of love, He who made us and cares for us and died for us, and shall judge us —therefore, because this is so, 'watch.' And thus may our light be found, when the midnight cry is made, if at the best dim and flickering, yet close to the Fountain of light, and easily supplied; thus may it, after the night-watch is for ever done, pass with us into the heavenly banquet, and shine out as the sun in the Kingdom of our Father.

H. ALFORD,
Advent Sermons, p. 166.

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I. The Orders of the Saved.

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. REVELATION xxi. 9.



HERE is this characteristic of religious Truth that there is of none other; that it is both definite and infinite: capable both of compression and expansion. In the few words of the Creed or the Catechism, this truth may be comprehended; in the mighty volumes of an Augustine or an Aquinas this truth is not exhausted. It is wide as the heavens, narrow as its small sanctuary in the human breast. There is a broad way of stating Christian verities, and there is a narrow. You may compress these verities, or expand them, as you will. The duty of the Pulpit, we take to be, to expand them, not to compress. The business of the preacher is, as occasion serves, to map out the whole of the territory which the Lord God hath given to the children of men: it is so to delineate the features of the celestial landscape, that every traveller may be taken with one or more of them, if not with all; so to describe the offices and purposes of the kingdom of God in the earth, that every citizen of the same may clearly identify his own place and prospects therein. We know of no subject that is capable of more compression on the one side, or of more expansion on the other, than the one brought before us by the return of this day; that of the coming of our Lord Jesus

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Christ to judge the world. The subject may be stated thus: that our Lord Jesus Christ will, by and by, come back to judge the world, when He will summon all mankind before His bar, and, dividing them into the two classes of the saved and the unsaved, shall assign the one class to heaven for ever, and consign the other for ever to hell. To state it thus is to compress the subject into its narrowest compass.

I. If the statement, that the whole of the race of Adam is divided into but two classes, does not accord with the facts of the world, we ask, first of all, what statement of the truth that there is to be some division of the race does accord with them? If it be divided into two classes, these two classes are endlessly subdivided. This is the truth that agrees with the fact. You say the two classes into which mankind are divided are the saved and the lost. Be they so: we ask, have you reflected how many orders and degrees there may be of both classes, especially of the saved? This is the only reflection justified by the facts of the case. It is difficult to know whence people gain their strange notions; as, that the future state is a vast Democracy, where all will be equal, and every one at liberty to do as he likes: that the sinner of one sex, if she can persuade herself she is forgiven, when she can sin no longer, forthwith becomes a fit companion for the blessed Virgin; and the transgressor of the other sex, if he can but depart comfortably, under the delusion that he has forsaken his vices, because his vices have forsaken *him*, is as suddenly transformed into a fit associate for S. Paul. There is nothing in holy Scripture that favours notions like these, and no right-minded person ought to favour them. There, we are plainly taught, if we be taught anything, that the ranks and degrees in the life to come will be quite as many and as various as in this, if not more so. ‘Every man in his own order.’

II. We ask, therefore, secondly, what are we to understand by the expression used in our text, as well as elsewhere in sacred Writ, ‘the bride’ of Christ? The answer with which Christians generally would be ready to this question would probably be, ‘By the bride is intended the whole multitude of the saved as distinguished from the unsaved.’ Is this the true answer? We trow not. By ‘the bride, the Lamb’s wife,’ we understand, not all the saved as distinguished from the unsaved, but some of the saved as distinguished from the rest. We are continually putting upon sacred words more meaning than they will bear. To tell us that a man is saved, is not to tell us all that we wish to know, or that is to be known, about a man: nay, it is to tell us comparatively little about him. We wish to know of a saved person, what kind of a saved person he is, and what, in and through the ‘state of salvation,’ he is becoming. We shall grant

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that the object of the religion we profess is to fit Christians for the everlasting society of their Lord, to be 'the bride' of Jesus. But are all Christians fitted for this; we do not say to see Christ, to be within reach of Christ, to be under the reign of Christ, but to be close to Christ, to be for ever in the confidence of Christ, to be 'the Lamb's wife'? To ask such a question is to answer it. All Christians are not fitted for the everlasting society of Christ; and if all be not, only some will be: and those that are fitted for it will enjoy it.

Loudly does a subject like this urge us to higher religious attainments. As loudly does it forbid us to rest satisfied with low ones; to suppose that forgiveness of sins, of itself, entitles us to heaven, that to be saved it is sufficient not to be lost, that to partake of the mercy of Christ fits us for the everlasting society of Christ. There is an outer circle of the redeemed, there is an inner circle, and there is a circle that is innermost. There is 'the bride of the Lamb,' there are those who may be described as 'the friends of the Bridegroom,' among the saved: there are those who are 'for' Christ, and there are those that are 'not against' Him. The ranks of spiritual and celestial society will be more plainly defined, in the end, than those of society, civil and social, now are: not by arbitrary decree, but in the very nature of things. Nothing is there in the Gospel to hinder us from being of the number of those who will be 'the bride' of Christ. If we ask, who they are that will 'go in with Christ to the marriage,' Christ tells us in the parable that they will be 'those who are ready': and if we ask, how they will be ready, this book tells us; for when 'the marriage of the Lamb is come,' His wife will have 'made herself ready.'

A. B. EVANS,
The Future of the Human Race.

II. The Saved Nations.

And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. REVELATION xxi. 24.

THREE are three points brought before us in this passage worthy of regard. First, it speaks of 'the nations of them which are saved'; secondly, it tells us, that these nations are to 'walk in the light' of something or somebody,—a light, at any rate, not their own; and thirdly, that 'the kings of the earth are to bring their glory and honour to the same light.' 'The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.'

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I. First, the nations of them which are saved,' or simply, 'the nations'; giving to the expression the widest possible scope. At the least, we must interpret it to mean, nations or races not lost; nations whose end is not 'the blackness of darkness,' but a graduation of light. We may probably be told that 'the nations of them which are saved' signify some persons saved out of all nations; we, however, take them to mean, whole nations saved. The word here used¹ is the same word that is made use of in the 25th chapter of S. Matthew's Gospel, where the 'gathering of all nations' before 'the Son of man' to judgment is spoken of. We cannot but think that the word here, as there, refers chiefly to the nations that will be upon earth at the period of Christ's return. The judgment described by S. Matthew is one which, while it includes Christians, does not exclude Pagans. The grounds of the acceptance or the rejection of those judged, being, not so much aught that is distinctively evangelical, as, so to say, 'good Samaritanism,' or its absence. The astonishment of some of those brought to that trial, at being apprised that the mercies they had shown to their brethren of mankind they had shown to Him who will be their Judge, and the astonishment of others, that they had refused the like mercies to their Judge in not having shown them to their brethren, and His, seem to point to numbers whom we cannot well regard as really, if nominally Christian, or they could not have been ignorant of these rudiments of their religion; though whether Christian or not, the humanity of the Judge is identified with that of them all. Our text, then, teaches us that there are 'nations of them which are saved'; or saved nations. We believe that the whole of the nations into which the Roman empire was broken up, together with those races which, since the discovery of Columbus, have populated the opposite hemisphere, may be described as saved nations. Their inhabitants, for the major part, consisting of baptized men and women, have been called to a state of salvation; while, through the presence of 'the Gospel of salvation' in their midst, they actually *are* saved from a multitude of errors and vices in which they would otherwise be entangled. Not that there will be no lost souls in these nations, but that the nations, as such, will be saved, though judged.

These *persons* that are saved, out of the *nations* that are *not* saved, will, as we understand it, be incorporated, under the government of the Messiah, with the nations that *are* saved. Of course, everything depends upon the sense we attach to saved nations. If we confound saved nations with glorified saints, or suppose that the nations of the saved constitute 'the bride, the Lamb's wife,' our reasoning will be of no avail. We believe that the passage before us,

¹ τὰ θερη.

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were there no other, was written to obviate the possibility of any such confusion on our parts. Here, at least, the distinction between the saved nation and the glorified saints is most carefully kept in view. Hence, we observe,

II. Secondly, that it is said here, that these 'nations of them which are saved' will 'walk,' live, have their characteristics perpetuated, enjoy their wellbeing, so far as they are capable of it, in a certain light; for with light alone is the possibility of life, whether animal or vegetable, natural or spiritual, earthly or heavenly: and darkness is one with death. 'The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it.' It is a borrowed light; a light not their own. Whose light? What light? Primarily, of course, it must be the light of Christ, for as there is no light in the natural world without the sun, so is there no light in the world of spirits without Christ, who is the Sun of that sphere. The light of saved nations compared with that of 'the holy city,' may be as the light of the moon to that of the sun; some of such nations may be so distant from the Sun of the city of God, as to be in comparative twilight: but, nevertheless, none shall be in total darkness. All these things point to a glorious reconstruction of human society in the ages to come, under Christ as its Head, and His saints as its administrators: a blessed amalgamation of the seen and the unseen, when, through the presence of the Lord God and of the Lamb, earth will be in heaven, and heaven upon earth.

III. Thirdly, we are told, that 'the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into' the city, 'in whose light the nations of them which are saved are to walk.' The words do but show in what high estimation the saints of God will be held, when they will have a city of their own, compared with that in which they are held now, when they have no city, but 'seek one,' this very one, 'to come.'¹ Then will those prophecies receive their glorious fulfilment, which we vainly endeavour to accommodate to the tarnished glories of the Church as she now is. As if to anticipate an objection as to how such vast multitudes could dwell on this globe, we are told that in 'the new earth' there will be 'no more sea';² though we have no right to suppose that spiritual bodies will require the same extension as natural ones.

We ought, I think, to be deeply thankful to the Holy Ghost, for a revelation like the one we have been examining. It ought to rejoice us greatly to know that the lost will be fewer than we feared; that the perdition of mankind will not be so wide as we deemed; that the damned will never outnumber the saved. It should give us solid joy to feel that God will be able to do something for many,

¹ Heb. xiii. 14

² Verse 1.

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who are doing so little for themselves, that He will be able to *make* something of those of whom we can make nothing ; that He will find room in His kingdom for thousands, for whom we might find none : and, that while we may be dreading lest His great house of the future, like many a place of worship now, should be half empty, He will take care that it shall be completely full. If these things do not give us joy, whoever may be lost, it is difficult to understand how we can hope to be saved.

A. B. EVANS,
The Future of the Human Race.

III The Binding of Satan

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. REVELATION XX. 1, 2.

THERE are questions that press heavily upon us in relation to this subject. If the Devil, whether or not the worst being in the dominions of the Supreme, is the wicked being we know him to be, and the instigator of so much wickedness in other creatures, therefore a most miserable being,—how does it consist with the goodness of the Divine Being to keep him in existence ? Why should God preserve alive so awful an opposite of His blessed Self ? I answer that the test of misery is the desire of annihilation. Now, it is not revealed to us, that Satan, wicked though he be, and miserable, because wicked, as all that are wicked must be, wishes to be annihilated ; that he would rather not be than be : and if existence to him, being what it is, be preferable, after all, to non-existence, we do not see that it militates in any way against the Divine benevolence for God to keep him in, or not to put him out of, existence, since, what he is, he hath made himself to be, after God had made him, like us, ‘upright.’¹ Were it otherwise, there would be a difficulty ; though even then, perhaps not an insuperable one. We may be asked, again, why, for the sake of the human race, whose relentless foe, and whose untiring tempter he is, does not the Almighty blot out Satan from the universe of being ? We do not know what right we have to ask a question like this ; still, if we do ask it, there is an answer to it to be educed from the words of our text. These words go straight to this very subject. They disclose to us something that God is, hereafter, going to do to this great adversary, for our sakes ; and with this grand prospect before us of what God will do in the future, it does not become us to ask why, in addition to all He hath already

¹ Ecclesiastes vii. 29.

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done, He hath not done something else in the past. We are no judges of anything that is fitting for God to do, till God hath done it. Then, when it is done, it will be seen to be the most fitting thing that God could do. We have here a Fact of the Future declared, and the Result of the fact stated.

I. First, here is a Fact of the Future declared. 'I saw an angel,' writes 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' 'come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.' Without inquiring whether these thousand years signify a definite or an indefinite period, what is here revealed unto us is clearly this; that at some period in the future, and for a very long time when that era comes, the power of Satan will be destroyed in the earth, and the adversary himself placed under the strongest restraint. How soon this may be we know not; but that it will not be before we Christians learn to bewail our own inability to put evil away from the midst of us, through our faithlessness to the blessed system under which God hath graciously placed us, as we have never yet done, we may be all but sure.

II. Secondly, we revert to the Results of this 'binding of Satan.' He is to be 'laid hold of,' we are here told, 'bound,' 'shut up,' by an angel of God that is stronger than he (stronger than he, because holier and more loyal), 'for a thousand years, and to have a seal set upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years shall be fulfilled.' The last thing, perhaps, in the Creation, that we should think of, would be the possibility of a harmless Devil. As 'the Devil sinned from the beginning,'¹ we suppose he must go on sinning to the end, as if the adorable Lord kept Satan, and wicked men, in existence for ever, only that they might sin. But if what we have said be true, there will not only be one harmless Devil, in the ages to come, but very many such; yea, all beings shall become harmless that ever did harm: harmless, we say, but not happy; for that would not be consistent with the harm they had previously done. 'They shall not hurt, nor destroy, in all God's holy mountain.'² God shall wear out those that 'wore out the saints of the Most High.'³ The time of this captivity of the adversary is most definitely fixed by the seer, between the first and the general resurrections. And as if to let the world see the difference between the state of things when God shall take to Himself His great power against the adversary, and that in which men are left to battle with him, by the help of God's grace, as best they may, it is said, that 'after the thousand years are finished, he is to be loosed

¹ S. John iii. 8.

² Isaiah xi. 9.

³ Daniel vii. 25, 26.

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for a little season';¹ till he is finally shut up, 'and death and hell, or hades, are cast into the lake of fire: which is the second death.'²

A. B. EVANS,
The Future of the Human Race.

IV. The Judgment Books.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

REVELATION XX. 12.

HOW close is the relation which men and books bear to each other! So close is it that it may be said they all but form a unity. Men are one with books, books one with men. They are inseparables. In either are the constituents of both. Between them is the sum-total of the moral world. If, as Solomon said, 'of making many books there is no end'—for to make any book was at that time of day a great labour,—quite as true is it, that but for the many books which have been made, as to every higher and nobler department of life, in a word, as to everything which can distinguish the existence of mankind from that of the creatures beneath them, there had long ago been an end of the world. Nay, more, we may say, that a man is a book, and a book, in some sort, a man. A man is an active book, and a book is but a passive man. The book can talk with us, though it keep silence; it can sympathise with the reader, though it gives no sign. The universe itself is but a book written with the finger of the Almighty, which angels and men were created to peruse. A book of 'beauty' is it, 'a joy' to all intelligences 'for ever,' graven with pen of precious metal, on leaves of glistening rock, bound with soft enamel, ornamented with a title-page of dazzling light, and clasps of starry jewels. Human character, again, is a volume which, though far from being committed universally to letter-press, we are always engaged in reading; an earnest that it will hereafter be re-read to us, by One who can make no mistake in the beginning, and who will have no need to insert a page of errata at the end. No marvel is it to us, as it seems to be to those who wish to set the universe at variance with the Bible, that the Most High should, 'in these last days,' have 'spoken' unto us by a Book, which everywhere speaketh of His Son, seeing that through books men are continually speaking to one another,—the dead to the living, as well as the living to those that are alive.

¹ Rev. xx. 3, 7.

² Rev. xx. 14.

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Consider the books of judgment here referred to.

I. First, 'the books.' 'The books were opened.' The expression points to more books than one. Be they, however, many or few, 'the dead are to be judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works.' The way in which the judgment is to be conducted would appear to be, by bringing what is written in these books into comparison with the contents of 'another book,' called here, 'the book of life'; out of which, no less than out of the other books, men are to be judged. What, then, are the books first mentioned? We do not think that there is much difficulty in ascertaining what these first-mentioned books are, with the book of God for our guide. It is clear they are authoritative books; books that will form standards in the judgment to come. We should, first of all, fix upon the book of Conscience or natural Law, as one of them. S. Paul asserts that this book will be sufficient for the acquittal or the condemnation, in the judgment, of all those to whom hath been vouchsafed no other. They who have had no other, will, we may be very sure, be judged solely by the one they had; and this which they had will suffice for their sentence. The almighty and merciful Lord hath legibly written certain laws in the natural constitutions of His rational creatures, and graven in their moral beings the character of those penalties which are attached to the violation of such laws: this is one of 'the books which will be opened' in the last day, and out of it will millions of the dead be judged at the last assize. We should name, secondly, the law of Moses, as another of 'the books which will be opened' in the judgment of the dead. Then, thirdly, we mention the Gospel or Law of Christ, as the other of 'the books.' 'Whatsoever things' the Gospel 'saith,' it saith to them 'that are under the' Gospel. As no Pagan, and no pre-evangelical Jew, will be judged by the Gospel, so no Christian can be judged without the Gospel. None who have been under the Gospel can ever be treated as though they had not been under it. It will thus be seen that these 'books which will be opened' in the judgment, will be more or less familiar to those who will have to abide the trial; that they will afford no new disclosures as to the nature or the desert of mortal guilt and transgression. At least, so far as we Christians are concerned, it is certain we can know nothing more about these matters than the Incarnation, the Passion, the Agony, and the Cross of Christ, have already told us and all worlds. Such being 'the books,' we have to inquire—

II. Secondly, what is the *book*? 'Another book was opened, which is the book of life': and out of this book no less than out of the former ones, it is said, the dead will be judged. What is this other book? Any difficulty in deciding what this book is, arises

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from the supposition that words in God's volume which have the same sound must always have the same sense. Did we take our ideas from, instead of carrying them to, the Bible, many of our difficulties of interpretation would disappear. Reading in this connection of 'another book, which is the book of life,' but that we do so with a preconceived notion, I think we should not be likely to confound it with that book in which is recorded the everlasting destinies of the redeemed. Taking the words as they stand, 'another,' not *the other*, 'another book, which is the book of life,' can only mean the book of human existence; the book of their life who will be brought to trial. This book will be set side by side with the other books; and what is 'written' in the other books will be compared with the blots and scrawls, or the fair epistles of Christ, in this. Of what use would it be to open 'the books,' if this 'book of life' were not to be opened? To judge is, among other things, to compare; to compare the life of the Heathen with the law of Nature, of the Jew with the law of Moses, of the Christian with the law of Jesus. The elliptical form of the expression here points to the book of which we speak. 'another book, which is of life'; or, of *the* life.

III. Thirdly, there is one more book, spoken of by the seer elsewhere, and in another part of the New Testament, by a fellow-apostle; it is 'the Lamb's book of life,' or simply, 'the book of life'; but in the latter case, the connection will show that it is the same book that is intended as in the former. It is referred to in the last verse of this chapter, in such a way as that it is impossible to confound it with 'the book of life' in the text. It is the book in which S. Paul tells us were 'the names of Clement and others of his fellow-labourers.' It is the book in which are the names of all who will be found worthy to live for ever with God, and in the eternal society of His Son. In this book are the title-deeds of the inheritance of 'the bride, the Lamb's wife.' It is this 'book of life' that gives 'right' to 'the tree of life,' insomuch that in the last chapter of this Revelation, the last verse but two in the Bible, what is translated 'book of life,' is literally 'tree of life.' They who have no part in the one are those who will have no part in the other.

A. B. EVANS,
The Future of the Human Race.

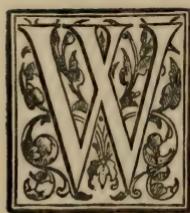
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The State of the Blessed Dead.

I.

LUKE xxiii. 43. PHILIPPIANS i. 23.



ITH death as an object of terror, with death from the mere moralist's point of view, as the termination of human schemes and hopes, we Christians have nothing to do. We are believers in and servants of One who has in these senses abolished death. Our schemes and hopes are not terminated by death, but reach onward into a state beyond it.

I. In both our texts one fact is simply declared, viz., that the departed spirit of the faithful man is *with* Christ. It is as if one bright light were lighted for us in the midst of a realm brooded over by impenetrable mist. For who knows whither the departed spirit has betaken itself when it has left us here? None has ever come back who has told the story. Where the spirit wakes and finds itself—this none has ever declared to us; nor shall we know until our own turn comes. Now, in such a state of uncertainty, these texts speak for us a certain truth. The departed spirit is with Christ.

II. This revelation disproves the idea of the spirit passing at death into a state of unconsciousness, from which it is to wake only at the great day of resurrection. If it is to be with Christ this cannot be. Christ is in no such state of unconsciousness. He has entered into His rest, and is waiting till all things shall be put under His feet; and it would be a mere delusion to say of the blessed dead that they shall be with Christ, if they were to be virtually annihilated during the term that Christ is waiting for His kingdom. Besides, how then would the Lord's promise to the thief be fulfilled?

III. Consider what this revelation implies. It clearly implies more than a mere expression of safe-keeping and reserve for a future state of blessedness. We may surely say: Nothing less than conscious existence in the presence of Christ is intended. Absence is our present state in reference to Him whom all Christians love. And it is absence aggravated in a way that earthly absence never is. For not only have we never seen Him, which is a case perfectly imaginable in earthly relations, but also, which hardly is, we have no absolute proof of His existence, nor of His mind towards us. Even as far as

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this is matter of faith and not of appearance. We have no token, no communication from Him. But the moment of departure from the body puts an end for ever to this imperfect, struggling, fitful state of faith and doubt. The spirit that is but a moment gone, that has left that well-known, familiar tabernacle of the body, and sudden wreck of inanimate matter—that spirit is with the Lord. All doubt, all misgiving, is at an end. Every wave raised by this world's storms, this world's currents of interest, this world's rocks and shallows, is suddenly lost, and there is a great calm. This sight of Christ implies, further, the entire absence of evil from the spirit. And as all evil will be at an end, so will all conflict and all labours. Labour here is a blessing, but it is also a weariness. It leads ever on to a greater blessing, the blessing of rest. Christ has entered into His rest, and the departed spirit shall be with Christ, faring as He fares, and a partaker of His condition.

H. ALFORD,
Advent Sermons, p. 5.

II.

But every one in his own order; Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming. 1 CORINTHIANS XV. 23.

FROM these words it is clear that the end of the expectant state of the blessed dead, and the reunion of their spirits with their risen bodies, will take place at the coming of Christ. Christ has, as the first-fruits of the great harvest, already risen, the first-born from the dead, the example and pattern of that which all His shall be. This was His order, His place in the great procession from death unto life; and between Him and His, the space, indefinite to our eyes, is fixed and determined in the counsel of God. The day of His coming hastens onward. While men are speculating and questioning, God's purpose remains fixed. His dealings with the world are on too large a scale for us to be able to measure them; but in them the golden rule is kept, Every one in his own order. Christ's part has been fulfilled. He was seen alone in His resurrection body; He was seen taking up that body from earth to heaven; and now we are waiting for the next great event,—His coming.

I. Wisely has the Church set apart a season in every year in which this subject may be uppermost in our thoughts. For there is nothing we are so apt, nothing, we may say, that our whole race is so determined, to forget and put out of sight. It is alien from our common ideas; it ill suits our settled notions that the personal appearing of Him in whom we believe should break in upon the natural sequence of things in which we are concerned; and the consequence is that you will hardly find, even among believing men, more

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than one here and there who at all realises to himself or his any **vivid** expectation of the personal coming of Christ.

II. The end of the state of waiting of the blessed dead, the end of our present state of waiting, will be the day of His appearing. Let us fix this well in our minds; and do not let us be kept from doing so by being told there is danger in allowing the fancy to exercise itself on the unfulfilled prophecies. Faith and fancy are two wholly distinct things. There can hardly be anything more detrimental to the faith of the Church than always to be putting together faith and prophecy; magnifying insignificant present or past events in fulfilments and prophetic announcements. They who do this are for ever being refuted by the course of things; and then they shift their ground, and come out as confidently with a new scheme as they did before with their old one. Nothing can more tend to throw discredit on God's Word altogether; and it is no doubt in part owing to such speculations that faith in the Lord's coming has been weakened among us. When, and as each prophecy comes to its time to be fulfilled, just as the years of the captivity predicted by Jeremiah were interpreted by the Church in Babylon, so the Lord's predictions, and the predictions of His Apostles, will fall each into its place; and the Church, if she endure in faith and watchfulness, will stand on her outlook and be prepared for the sign of His coming.

H. ALFORD,
Advent Sermon, p. 29.

III.

It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. HEBREWS ix. 27.

FOR the blessed dead the judgment has no dark side: 'there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' But though it has no dark side, it has a bright one. Never for a moment do the Christian Scriptures lose sight of the Christian reward. Those who die in the Lord, like the rest of men, shall be laid open before the tribunal of Christ. Their sin is all purged away in His atoning blood; they have been washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of Jesus, and by the Spirit of their God.

I. But to what end? To what purpose? Was it merely that they might be saved? No, indeed, but that God might be glorified in them by the fruit of their faith and love.

And these fruits shall then be made known. The Father who saw them in secret shall then reward them openly. The acts done and the sacrifices made for the name of Christ shall then meet with glorious retribution. Yea, even to the least and most insignificant

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of them, even according to our Lord's own words, to the cup of cold water given to one of His little ones.

It is much the fashion in our days to put aside and to depreciate this doctrine of the Christian reward. It looks to some people like a reliance on our own works and attainments; and so, though they may in the abstract profess a belief in it because it is in Scripture, they shrink from applying it in their own cases and in those of others. Now nothing can justify such a course. We have no right to discard a motive held up for our adoption and guidance in Scripture. The holy dead who have died in the Lord will in the judgment have each his reward allotted him according to his service and according to his measure. Then the good that has been done in secret will all come to light. All mere profession, all that has been artificial and put on, will drop off as though it had never been: and the real kernel of the character, the fair-dealing, and charity, and love of the inner soul will be made manifest before men and angels. Then, not even the least work done for God and for good will be forgotten. How such an estimate of all holy men will be or can be made and published utterly surpasses our present powers to imagine. But this need not form any difficulty in our way to believe that such a thing shall be. The power to understand it and the power to receive it surely do not dwell further off from our matured powers now than the full powers of a grown-up man from the faculties and conceptions of a child. In all such matters we are children. How think we then of the blessed dead at the day of the resurrection, as rising sure of bliss and of their perfection in Him to whom they were united; being as though there were no judgment, seeing that they have One who shall consider for them at the tribunal; judged before the bar of God, and passing not to condemnation, but to their exceeding glory and eternal reward.

H. ALFORD,
Advent Sermons, p. 51.

IV.

And so shall we ever be with the Lord. 1 THESSALONIANS iv. 17.

THESE words contain in them all that has been revealed of the glorious state, included in one simple description. The bliss of the moment after death consisted in being with Christ, the bliss of unlimited ages can only be measured by the same measures with Him that made us, union with Him who redeemed us, the everlasting and unvexed company of Him who sanctifieth us. What glory, what dignity, what happiness can be imagined for man other than this?

I. Where the glorious abode of Christ is, His redeemed shall be;

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we have not been told by revelation, and it were idle to indulge in speculations of our own. From some expressions of Scripture, it would seem not improbable that it may be this earth itself after purification and renewal; from other passages it would appear as if that inference were hardly safe, and that other of the bodies in space are destined for the higher dignity of being the home of the sons of God.

II. Of mankind in glory, thus perfected, what shall be the employ? Let us think how much employment for our present energies is occasioned by and finds its very field of action in the anxieties and necessities of life. They are, so to speak, the winds which fill the sails and carry us onwards. By their action hope and enthusiasm are silent. But suppose a state where they are not, a life which becomes a dead calm, the sail which flaps idly, and the spirit would cease to look onward at all. So that unless we can supply something over and above mere absence of anxiety and pain, we have not attained to—nay, we are further than ever from—a sufficient employment for the life eternal. When we remember that all blessings come by labour of the goodly heat of exercised energy, shall we deny to the highest of all states the choicest of all blessings? So that the attainment of and advance in the light and knowledge peculiar to the glorious land must be imagined as affording unending employment for the blessed hereafter. And this gives us another insight into the matter. As there is so great disparity among men here, so we may well believe will there be there. All Scripture goes to show that there will be no general equalising, no flat level of mankind. Degrees and ranks as they are now, there will indeed be none. Not the possession of wealth, not the accident of birth, which are held here to put difference between man and man, will make any distinction there; but inequality and distinction will proceed on other grounds: the amount of service done for God; the degree of entrance will be obedience and knowledge of Him; these will put the difference between one and another there.

H. ALFORD,
Advent Sermons, p. 73

Holy Days in Advent

S. ANDREW

Scriptures Proper to the Day

EPISTLE	ROM. X. 9-21.
GOSPEL	S. MATT. IV. 18-22.
FIRST MORNING LESSON .	ISA. LIV.
SECOND MORNING LESSON .	S. JOHN I. 35-43.
FIRST EVENING LESSON .	ISA. LXV. 1-17.
SECOND EVENING LESSON .	S. JOHN XII. 20-42.

And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him. S. MATTHEW iv. 19, 20.



E celebrate to-day 'the glorious triumph of blessed Andrew'; how he gained through the Cross the martyr's crown. But the Church in her Gospel and Collect directs our thoughts to the beginning of his life rather than to the end, to its dawn rather than to its sunset. Our Lord was walking by the sea of Galilee when He saw Andrew and Peter. How often do the turning-points both of our natural and spiritual life *seem* to depend upon a chance meeting! It was, however, by no accident that Jesus walked on the shore of the lake at the very time when these fishermen were casting their nets into the sea; it was for the purpose of calling them from being fishers of fish to become fishers of men.

I. First, notice that the call came to these men when they were at work. Our Lord chose working men to be His disciples. He was a carpenter Himself. There are doubtless many reasons why the Son of God should have employed poor men to become the founders of His kingdom. Men believe, as Seneca has said, more what they see than what they hear. The doctrine of humility, of poverty, of renunciation of the maxims of the world, would come with greater

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force from the lips of those whose outward condition was in keeping with their teaching. And, further, the danger of self-exaltation is attached to offices of great honour and dignity. The remembrance of their origin, and the mean estate from which they had been raised, would serve for a counterpoise to the temptations which might assail even Apostles in the hour of greatness and triumph.

But there is yet another reason for Christ's choice. The life of the Apostolate is a life of toil, and thus those inured by early experiences to hardship present to the eye of Christ the most fitting material for the Apostolic life.

(1) *The call was brief*—‘Follow Me’; but what did it involve? Clearly one thing: taking Christ for their Example. To follow Him was a bodily act in their case, but it demanded the surrender of their whole being. It was to cast in their lot with Him, to be ‘with Him’ (S. Mark iii. 14), to yield up their hearts to Him, to listen to His words, to watch His looks, to imitate His ways; in short, to receive the impress of His life.

(2) *The call was forcible*. It is generally held that S. Matthew's account of it is incomplete, and is to be supplemented by the record of the miraculous draught of fishes, which is preserved by S. Luke. If so, then a work of power accompanied the words, ‘Follow Me,’ which must have awakened in the minds of the disciples both a sense of the greatness of Him who thus invited them to follow Him, and of their own unworthiness. But the external sign would not have been enough. ‘Full of grace are Thy lips,’ says the Psalmist (Ps. xlv. 2), speaking prophetically of Christ. And grace it was which touched the soul of S. Andrew as the loving invitation of the Saviour of mankind sounded in his ears.

(3) *The call was gentle*. S. Andrew's vocation has nothing convulsive or emotional about it. Gentle as the summer breeze, soft as the ripple of the waves upon the shores of Gennesareth, or the ‘still small voice’ which arrested the attention of Elijah on Mount Horeb; and yet how impressing its claims upon the soul! Earthly pursuits may engage our attention, and rightly so; but they have their limit, they cannot satisfy; even the best and highest lose their charm. How many an aim in life, which once seemed to absorb us, is now no longer remembered. Through life we may mark, perhaps, many such bygone interests, which remain only like grey embers of some extinct fire. But work for God never grows old; work for God has an undying charm, as it has eternal issues. ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’

II. Let us briefly consider the response to this call.

(1) *It was prompt*—‘They straightway left their nets and followed Him.’ It is this feature of S. Andrew's self-surrender which is par-

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ticularly enforced upon our attention and imitation in the Collect for the day. S. Andrew 'readily obeyed the calling of Christ,' and 'followed Him without delay.' To be able to follow Christ, three things are necessary: His grace; surrender of will; and time. On none of these can we reckon for the future.

S. Andrew has the glory of being Christ's first disciple. It was the revelation of the Saviour, it was the 'Agnus Dei'—the Lamb of God—coming with such arresting power upon his soul as S. John the Baptist pointed out Christ, which was the first dawn of the life of grace in Andrew. There had been preparations in the school of the Baptist going before it; this was the commencement of realisation.

(2) S. Andrew's response to Christ's call was *complete*. He gave up all for Christ; and the small possessions of the poor, be it remembered, are as dear to them as the wealth of the rich. They have the same love for their surroundings, and feel the same pain in leaving them. S. Andrew has now come to the point where a decision must be made, and he has the grace and strength to make it. The whole consequences of his choice nothing but eternity can unfold. The spiritual life of many is marred by the want of entirety in the sacrifice. Andrew yielded himself up entirely to the drawings of God's Spirit, and to the love of Christ, and thus—no man more free than he when he left the boats and nets, and the lake, bound up as it was with all the associations of early life—followed Christ.

(3) And this following of his Lord was *lasting*. Many followed Christ for a time, and then 'went back and walked no more with Him' (S. John vi. 66). Some began 'to build' without counting 'the cost' (Luke xiv. 28), and were 'not able to finish.' But S. Andrew persevered to the end. First, the friend of Christ, then the disciple, then the Apostle, then the martyr. If there was a beauty and a softness in the dawn of his spiritual life, there was a deep glow and richness in the sunset. Both brothers, Peter and Andrew, died on crosses; but whilst S. Peter seems at first to have shrunk from his passion, S. Andrew hailed the cross with holy desire. Thus S. Andrew's obedience to Christ's call was prompt, complete, and lasting.

There are three lessons which may be drawn from the conduct of S. Andrew. First, we must strive to follow Christ, whatever may be our calling.

Secondly, S. Andrew is in an especial sense the missionary Apostle, ever leading others to Christ; his brother first. If we value truth and grace we *must* feel a desire, a burning desire, to bring others to share with us these blessings. Become 'fishers of men': resolve to strive to bring some relation or friend to the feet of Jesus, after the pattern of S. Andrew.

And, lastly, are you called to suffer—and who at some time is not?

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—see something of this saint's brightness and hilarity of spirit. Hail the affliction as coming from God. See the sparkling gems gleaming already from the crown of glory above the Cross. Never look at Mount Calvary without a glimpse of the Mount of Transfiguration, and remember that 'if we suffer with' Christ, we shall be 'glorified together' (Romans viii. 17).

W. H. HUTCHINGS,
Sermons for the People, p. 1.

S. Andrew.

One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother, Simon, and saith unto him: We have found the Messias (which is, being interpreted, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. S. JOHN i. 40-42.

S. ANDREW was a native of Bethsaida, a town of Galilee, on the coast of the lake of Gennesareth, and by trade a fisherman. His father's name was Jona, and he was the brother, as most have thought the younger brother, of Simon Peter. That he was, in spite of the disadvantages of an imperfect education, and a worldly calling that must have occupied much of his thoughts and time, a man of inquiring mind and sincere concern for the highest interests of his soul, may I think be assumed from his being found among the followers of that stern preacher of righteousness, S. John the Baptist.

He was no man of a wavering faith or lukewarm devotion who would consent to be a disciple of a teacher who read men's hearts so truly, and reproved their sins so unsparingly. When we can still listen gladly to a preacher who is no prophesier of smooth things, so long as we feel that he is preaching to us God's truth, we may accept it as a token that it is a real hungering after righteousness, and not merely an itching ear, or a restless curiosity, that has possession of our souls. People do not like to be spoken to as plainly as John the Baptist used to speak, unless their desire is not to be humoured, but to be saved.

It was at the feet of such a master that Andrew originally sat; and by him, he was, in a measure, prepared for the discipleship of Christ. He had no doubt often heard the Baptist speak of the still mightier Teacher who was to come after him. He had listened to him as he unrolled the ancient prophecies, and foretold their speedy fulfilment. He knew that his present instructor's work was but preparatory to the richer and more gracious dispensation that was on the eve of being revealed.

And so, as he one day stood with his master by the river Jordan,

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and saw a Person coming towards them, upon whom S. John looking said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God !’ he seems to have felt himself irresistibly drawn to the Stranger. ‘He followed Him, and came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day’: and left Him a worshipper and a believer.

I. S. Andrew, then, was the first known follower of our Blessed Lord. But he was more than this. He was, so to speak, the first missionary, the first who put in his sickle to the corn in the Church’s harvest-field. He did not spend that night with his new Instructor, in His lowly dwelling, without learning that the spirit of the new religion which he had accepted was eminently not selfish and personal, but disseminative and corporate. He realised the fact that Christ was come upon the earth not so much to pick up outcast souls one by one, or to make the greatest saints out of the greatest sinners—which is some people’s notion of the *ordinary* results of grace—as to knit together His elect into one communion and fellowship—to set up a kingdom—to build a Church, and in doing so, to make the welfare of each individual more or less dependent upon the growth and development of the whole.

If there is one corrupt element in our nature more than another that the Gospel is framed to eradicate, it is *selfishness*, even religious selfishness—for there is such a thing—the notion, that is, that Christ died for us alone: that we need only concern ourselves about our own souls: that, as wicked Cain said, we are not our brother’s keeper’: that it matters not if the whole world perish, so long as we ourselves and a few others who think like us—whom we therefore take upon ourselves to call the elect—are saved. You will look in vain through the New Testament for countenance for such views. As the Church is a universal brotherhood, so is it with a spirit proper to a member of such a community that every individual Christian must be actuated.

S. Andrew felt this. He did not think that when he had found Christ he had found a treasure to be hidden and selfishly appropriated to his own comfort and profit alone. No sooner was he convinced of the reality of his discovery than he wished others to share it, and be the better for it too. He is the first Christian example of the grace of charity and the power of brotherly love.

II. S. Andrew was, moreover, the human instrument in bringing the first Gentiles to Christ—‘the Greeks who desired to see Jesus.’ They had heard of Jesus, and wished to see Him, and they applied for the purpose to Philip, apparently because he was the first of our Lord’s immediate followers who fell in their way. And what does Philip do? He comes to tell Andrew. But why? Why not himself introduce them to Christ? especially as he was a man of like

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disposition, and had himself before been instrumental in awakening the curiosity of Nathanael to come and see the despised Nazarene? My own opinion is that he told Andrew because he was sure he should find in him a kindred spirit: one who would sympathise with these poor inquirers: one who would know no distinction of race: one who would be puffed up with no vain conceit of Jewish privileges in dealing with the strangers: one who followed the promptings of his own heart, and not the selfish calculations of pride or prejudice: one who delighted in any enlargement of the borders of his Master's kingdom, and who, by the instinct of a loving heart more than by the grasp of a powerful understanding, already anticipated the time when there should be neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, *but all one in Christ Jesus*. The great mystery of the Gospel, hidden before both from priests and prophets, this unlettered fisherman of Galilee, by the unerring discernment of an affectionate and unselfish soul, I will not say comprehended, but apprehended, and acted on. As he was the first of the Apostles to make Christ known to the Jew—his own brother Simon—so may he, with equal truth, be said to have been foremost to 'open the door of faith unto the Gentiles.' He united the opposite missions of S. Peter and S. Paul. He preached the Gospel to the circumcision, and to the uncircumcision also.

III. We should be mistaking our vocation if we thought Christ bade us, as He bade His Apostles, 'go forth into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.' We are only too ready to make a kind of vague, general interest in the success and enlargement of the Church serve as a substitute for the definite personal duties that meet us at our own door. But these homely duties cannot, any more than can missionary calls, be discharged without the spirit of self-sacrifice. Christ certainly calls us all to give up *something*, 'and follow Him.' Let it be our care to find out what that 'something' is. It is what we shall find very near our hearts, intimately associated, as we think, with our daily happiness and comfort; very pleasant perhaps, and hard to part with; a different thing in different men, but in all *so far* the same that it is a something which is absorbing too much of our thoughts and care—which carnalises instead of spiritualising them; which makes them earthlier instead of heavenlier, and which, like the cherished right hand or eye, if it be not cut off or plucked out, may *ultimately* be the cause of their whole body being cast into hell.

IV. S. Andrew is one of the eleven who meet together in the upper chamber of Jerusalem to complete anew the apostolic number, and fill up the vacant bishopric from which Judas 'by transgression fell.' Ecclesiastical history tells us that he prosecuted his missionary

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labours with great success in the countries bordering on the Caspian Sea, and sealed a life of devotion to his Master's service by a blessed martyrdom, being crucified as his Lord had been ; and, true to his character even in his death-agonies, still having strength and boldness enough to exhort the standers-by to 'look unto Jesus,' and if need were, 'to resist even unto blood, striving against sin.'

In the same spirit he, though dead, this day still speaks to us. He makes us feel, with as constraining an influence as ever, the power and beauty of those twin sisters of grace—the love of the brotherhood, the sacrifice of self. We still have our sacrifices to make, though we do not look to them for expiation. We still have deeds of brotherly love to show, though we claim for them no recompence at God's hand on the score of merit. We know that we are saved by grace, and we should be slow to rest our title of acceptance on anything but the free and undeserved mercy of Almighty God. But still, Christ is our Example as well as our Atonement. He, too, has taught us that the love of others, and the sacrifice of self, are things which God delights in, and which He has promised to reward. If we cultivate these graces we shall not only be walking in the steps of S. Andrew, but of Jesus also.

Not unfitly therefore, as exhibiting in his life and character some of the fairest fruits of faith, no less than on historical grounds as the first-called of the Apostles of the Lord, does S. Andrew's name stand foremost in the catalogue of Christian saints. He is a representative man, a type of the power of grace, of the measure of possible, rational holiness. There is nothing *extraordinary* recorded of him—no ecstasies, or special illuminations, or catchings-up to the third heaven, or visions, or revelations of the Lord : no almost super-human acts either of doing or suffering, of patience, or courage, or saintly heroism. His is simply the history of a calm, affectionate, teachable heart, ripening, educated, developed into features of singular loveliness under the discipline of the doctrine of Christ, by the secret, permeating influence of pure and guileless motives—the habitual, almost instinctive, discharge of homely, active duties.

BISHOP FRASER,

University Sermons, p. 263.

The Blessing of making Good Use of Opportunities.

One of them who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew. S. JOHN i. 20.

I. **W**E may learn from the first passage told us of S. Andrew's history, how precious a rule it would be for every one who desires to please God, to be quick and ready in seizing opportunities

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of the kind; not to stand waiting till they are past, but to seize them at once, not knowing whether or no any fresh opportunity will be granted. So we must do for our own soul's good, and so we must do for our brethren's sake also.

II. Life is full of opportunities; to every one of us as surely as to S. Andrew. They meet us at every turn, if we will but notice them. Every hour we may do some little towards making our peace with Christ sure; so great, so unwearied is His mercy towards us. Many slight things make great things; many little obediences make a habit of obedience to God's commands. Such might be, to take some vacant moment to pray. If it is seized, it might be the beginning of multiplied, manifold prayers, each of which would be heard by God. It might be to save some one for God, or against sin, or sinful negligence of God. If seized, it might suggest fresh occasions of speaking for God, and zeal for His glory, and confessing Him before men, adoring God, very quietly and simply, to our brother's soul.

J. KEBLE,

Sermons for Saints' Days, p. 11.

Home and Foreign Missions.

He first findeth his own brother, Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias. S. JOHN i. 41.

I AM not going to speak this morning about any of the subjects which are labelled as being specially appropriate to what is called the missionary service. I am not going to talk about the universality of the Gospel, about the adaptation of Christian truth to satisfy all nations and all forms of Christianity, nor about the philosophy or usefulness of what we call foreign missions. I want rather to deal with a very much more humble, but personally important matter, and that is the obligation that lies upon every one of us, in the measure in which we know Jesus Christ for ourselves, to tell others about Him. That should be the one mainspring of all missionary enterprise, and without that I do not much care for societies or united work. Those quiet, simple words that I have read to you are the beginning of all the grand unfolding panorama of all Christian evangelistic and missionary work ever since.

I. Wherever you get men and women truly under the influence of Christian principles, having themselves, in any profound and real way, laid hold of Christ for themselves first, as a personal Friend and Saviour, then you get somebody that cannot help themselves, but must do their best to make other people possess the joy. Every Christian man, *ipso facto*, in the measure of his Christianity, is a mis-

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isionary. The missionary spirit is nothing else but a profound experience of the power and preciousness of Jesus Christ ; and if, in any given place, you get people who are influenced and sanctified by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, in some measure and degree, yet have no consciousness of this instinctive impulse, I am afraid there is only one answer to the question.

It was because these two young men had been very near Christ for a day that they went and found their two brothers ; it was the enthusiasm and the impulse flowing from communion with Him that compelled them thus to go and speak, and if you put that into its widest form it is just this :—The measure of our own deep, earnest, vital communion with Jesus Christ will be the measure generally of our earnestness in trying to speak about Him ; and if we have never known the impulse, if we have never felt a burden in our hearts that we must speak, if we have never felt that love to our brethren and faithfulness to our own conscientious convictions compelled us to utter them, then I am afraid that our Christian life is only very imperfect and feeble.

II. In this little incident let us see, in the next place, the beautiful simplicity, on a level with every Christian heart, of the all-prevailing influence of the Messias. These two young men would not go and say to their brothers, ‘Come, let us sit down here and discuss with you the question of the evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus Christ from prophecy.’ They would not say, ‘Here, let us begin and have a long talk about controversial matters, and argue out the question whether Jesus is the Messias.’ They went, and with the light of a personal affection blazing in their glad faces, they each found his brother and said to him, ‘I have found the Messias,’ and that was enough. Well now, take the plain lesson out of that, and it is just this. The thing that is to win the world, and the thing that all Christian men and women can easily do, is to speak a word to others of your own personal experience of Jesus Christ as a Saviour.

III. And now, the last thing I have to set forth briefly is this. My text here sets before us two lines in which our work for Christ is to run. Don’t let us go cutting nasty channels for ourselves, but take the one that God has provided. This man goes and lays hold of the man nearest him, and the one that he loves best. Of course, he could not do anything else. How he would have stared if any one had said to him, ‘Ay ! that is right to speak to your brother ; if you had gone into Galilee, and spoken to the people there, you would have been neglecting home duties.’ I take that text with all my heart. First of all the home, the narrow home, the home where husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, live. But the people that tell us not to neglect home, and to confine our work to home, are not as

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a rule the people who work in the home fields ; and the people that they advise not to neglect home are mostly the people that work at home as well as abroad. But I should rather say : ' Why, have you not found out yet, with all your intelligent grasp of the principle of Christianity, that the one main object for which Christianity was given was that the whole world should be the sphere of our labours ? ' Those people that attack us Christians for our foreign missions can talk about the solidity of the human race and the fraternity of mankind, and so forth. Well, I say if we have all one God, one Father in heaven, one human heart, then we are all of us brethren ; and where there are bonds there are the channels, and where there are men there are the places for us to work. A. MACLAREN,

British Weekly Pulpit, vol. ii. p. 585.

Saints are like Sparks in Stubble.

He first findeth his own brother Simon. JOHN i. 41.

I. **W**E see from this passage how much was gained not only for Andrew himself, and for those persons whom he brought directly to Christ, but also for Christ's kingdom in all ages, and for ourselves among the rest, by this one saint's diligent and dutiful watching of all opportunities and times for instruction and devotion. He suffered nothing to pass away as in a dream. So when anything strikes us particularly in a prayer or a lesson, we have reason to think that God Almighty would have us lay hold of the thought, carry it home with us, think of it afterwards, and see what difference we should make in our conduct.

II. It is true Christian wisdom to do as S. Andrew did ; not violently introducing on all occasions the mention of the most sacred things, but never leaving them out of your mind, and gently doing what you can to make people's attention turn towards them of itself. In this way, a look, a tone of voice, or a single word, used for the purpose, humbly and in the fear of God, would often do more good, and less tempt both speaker and hearer to any kind of hypocrisy, than a set and formal discourse would. We make it our rule, never to think anything beneath notice which is ordered by God's providence, and for which immortal souls may be the better or the worse, ever remembering that the Apostle's rule holds alike for good or evil. ' Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth.'

J. KEBLE,
Sermons for Saints' Days, p. 1.

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S. Andrew's Message.

He first findeth his own brother, Simon. S. JOHN i. 41.

I. **S.** ANDREW is the pattern of those who bring their brethren—who bring a single brother—to the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

And this is a precious lesson to meet us on the threshold of a new year. God has so formed our hearts and minds, that things impress us far more deeply at one moment than at another; and which first meet us on a day like this, may well make us thoughtful, every man as his brother's keeper; every man is bound to regard every other for whom Christ died as his brother; is bound to feel in him a true and loving interest; to experience a real anxiety for his welfare, above all for his soul's health.

II. And the lesson thus gathered wants no adornment, and scarcely any amplification. To help to spread the Gospel in foreign parts, to help in some way to spread the Gospel here at home; to relieve the misery and want of any; yet more, to go to the aid of famishing souls—this is the plain duty of all. And it is an Advent duty too.

But yet, more closely, we may derive from what has been said a reminder to look more anxiously after the welfare of those round about us; and if we have neglected it in times past, at least not to neglect it now. The whole system of God's government of the world is ministerial. God deigns to work by means, and in this lower world by human means. He condescends to make us His instruments. The love manifested by a soul which God hath tried, touches as love of the diffusive character. It is the very note of true Christian earnestness that it cannot rest until it has brought others into the presence of Him whom it supremely loves, in order to make them partakers of its bliss.

J. W. BURGON,

Ninety-one Short Sermons, No. 1.

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S. THOMAS THE APOSTLE

Scriptures Proper to the Day

EPISTLE	EPHES. II. 19-22.
GOSPEL	S. JOHN XX. 24-31.
FIRST MORNING LESSON .	JOB XLII. 1-.
SECOND MORNING LESSON .	S. JOHN XX. 19-24.
FIRST EVENING LESSON .	ISAIAH XXXV.
SECOND EVENING LESSON .	S. JOHN XIV. 1-8.

The Doubting Apostle.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed ; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. S. JOHN xx. 29.

I.



OTHING, I think, is more remarkable in the account of our Lord's resurrection than the proved incredulity of the disciples. For these disciples were what we should call credulous men living in a credulous age. It was an age when all men believed that Messiah should come from heaven on a glorious cloud, and when multitudes could be induced to go forth to see

the walls of Jerusalem fall down flat, or the stream of the Jordan dry up. Moreover, the Apostles shared to the full the superstitious feelings of their native Galilee. When they saw their Master walking on the sea, they cried out that it was a spirit. They seem to have thought it possible that the calamity of the man born blind might have been due to his own antenatal sin ; and they certainly hoped, even to the last, for the coming of that miraculous kingdom which should be established and governed by a conquering Messiah.

How is it, then, that they cannot believe in the fact of the Resurrection, a fact which their Master had distinctly foretold ? It was natural, perhaps, that they should look with suspicion upon the reports of excitable women : but why, we naturally ask, had the empty sepulchre no meaning for Simon, and why do we read that even when the evidence of sense had convinced the majority, some obstinate sceptic still doubted ?

It is all explained, I think, by this one circumstance, that their Master's death and resurrection were unwelcome facts, repugnant to their prejudices and destructive of their hopes. They had looked for a Messiah, not who should succumb to His enemies, but who should conquer them, not who should prove His resurrection privately to spiritual men, but who should shine forth in His glory before the eyes of an astonished world, and should compel the

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obedience of the Gentiles. In one word, the obstacle to their belief was a moral obstacle ; precisely the same kind of obstacle which so often hinders belief in the Resurrection to-day. Why do materialistic critics refuse to believe in the Resurrection ? Because they have persuaded themselves, on what they call scientific grounds, that no miracle is possible, and that such a thing as spirit is an illusion. Since, therefore, Christ's resurrection would imply that a miracle was performed, and that a man's spirit did survive the death of his body, therefore they hold it to be incredible. The incredulity of the disciples was produced, like this modern incredulity, by a preconceived prejudice.

Thomas has been called the rationalistic Apostle, but I cannot think justly. For, with the possible exception of S. John, all the Apostles were rationalistic in the sense that they would not believe, without sensible evidence, what they did not wish to believe. No doubt Thomas put his objection strongly, even coarsely ; but still something must be allowed for the heated feeling of one who has to resist alone the pressure of what he deems a deluded majority ; nor must we forget that when the evidence of touch was offered to Thomas, he made, it would seem, no movement to attain it.

II. The fundamental and most important element in all knowledge, and all reasoning, is not that which is furnished from without, or derived by logical processes, but that which comes to us spontaneously and intuitively, in consequence of a spiritual constitution with which we were born, and which we can neither alter nor explain.

Well then, if God, the Giver of that constitution, should become our direct Teacher in things moral and spiritual, what is the method which we should expect Him to follow, that of logic or that of revelation ? He knows our constitution ; knows what truths we were made to believe, what truths will be self-evidencing to us. Should we not then expect Him to set such truths before our mind, and then leave them by the intrinsic force of their verity to overcome by degrees our stubborn prejudices and customary errors ?

And is not this precisely what the Lord Jesus did ? In the usual sense of the word, our Divine Master *proved* nothing. Not because he lacked logical force. No, when He has to expose the Rabbinical perversions of the written law, nothing can be keener or more convincing than his dialectic. But in his positive teaching He adopts, as surely we should expect, the method of revelation. 'He taught with authority, and not as the scribes.' Setting before men's minds great truths like the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of men, the Divine necessity of forgiveness, the power of self-sacrifice, the eternal supremacy of love, He leaves the clear statement of these truths to be their only proof. Men *ought* to believe them because

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they are intrinsically believable, because they are such truths as the mind was formed to receive. If men have 'honest and good hearts' they must believe them.

Now, I believe that it is just this great truth which is expressed in our text. S. Thomas, made stubborn by his fears, prejudices, and baffled hopes, demanded sensible evidence. 'Let me *see*, let me *touch*,' he said, 'and I will be satisfied.' The Lord in mercy gave him the evidence demanded, and then, strange to say, when that evidence was within reach he found the greater part of it worthless. And why? Because he was more than a rationalist, because, perhaps unconsciously, there slumbered behind his superficial rationalism the spiritual thoughts and feelings which his Master's teaching and example had awakened within him. As soon, therefore, as he saw the Saviour, as soon as the dear and familiar presence had quickened into life the associations of that heavenly communion in which he had lived, his heart leaped forth to its object with adoring love.

Yes, and observe how far it overleaped the frigid acknowledgment of a mere phenomenal fact. He does not cry, 'Thy word was true, Thou hast conquered death,' but, 'My Lord and my God!' When Thomas surrenders, he surrenders altogether. If his Master lives, then He is Divine, He is all which the most daring belief had ever gathered from His words. Sight, it is true, was necessary to Thomas, as necessary to stimulate faith in him as nervous vibrations are to stimulate sensation in us. But when once the stimulus has been given, then faith outruns its immediate object and pauses not until it rests at the feet of the Divine Redeemer. Sight to another might have assured nothing more than the living presence of the Redeemer, and if to Thomas it means more, that is because there was in Thomas the spiritual eye which could discern more.

BISHOP MOORHOUSE,
Cambridge Review, May 17, 1888.

Lessons from S. Thomas.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. S. JOHN xx. 29.

AS our Saviour's ministry began with the act of blessing, it was well that, after the resurrection, it should wellnigh close His work. For it is itself a proof of the unchanged character of our risen Lord,—a necessity to bless.

Accordingly here, just before He ascended into heaven, we have it pronounced upon one grace,—which is, above all others, the characteristic of the Christian religion, faith, simple faith:—'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'

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It is a beatitude which accords well with the margin of time when He was about to disappear from His Church's view; and for which we may be especially thankful who live in a generation far down from those great transactions which were once wrought upon our earth,—visibly and palpably,—to be and to make the great framework of man's salvation.

For, if ever it occurred to any one to look back, with a longing eye, on those privileged to live in those distant days,—to see the Lord face to face,—to commune with Him,—a Man with men,—then, we can assure that man, that his own lot, if only he 'believe,'—is more privileged than theirs; for not only did our Lord declare this, when He said, 'It is expedient for you that I go away'; but He actually drew the comparison between those who 'see,' and those who 'do not see'; and He has pronounced the balance in favour of those who 'do not see'; and He has gathered up the result in His last beatitude,—'Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'

The great difficulty which we all find is in getting out of a life, which is made up of things that address themselves to the outward senses; and to rise into a higher level; and a sphere of things, which we do 'not see' and cannot touch; but which we know to be great, greater than the visible. That is religion: always to be detaching ourselves from the influence of the things about us, which have to do with the present moment, which give a short gratification, but which drag down the mind, and narrow and confine the intellect; and to lift up our thoughts and desires among those unseen grandesses,—which are high and pure and holy,—which 'no eye hath ever seen, and which no ear hath ever heard.' And how hard a thing it is, every one knows who has tried to resist the moral gravitation of their own nature. For nature rules itself by the material; grace rules itself by the spiritual. So it comes to pass that, with most of us, outward circumstance is everything; and the true character of things becomes inverted: the 'seen' things become the substances, and the 'unseen' things, the shadows; while, really, the 'unseen' things are the substances, and the 'seen' things are the shadows.

But to escape from this wrong calculation, to reverse things, and to put them back again in their right proportion,—is the work of the grace of God in a man's heart. Therefore it is according to God's own work that He puts it under a beatitude,—for God never puts a beatitude but upon His own work,—'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'

It would be foolish for us to attempt to determine positively what was the cause of Thomas's unbelief on the occasion to which these words refer. Some have excused him altogether. But our Saviour's

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few emphatic words plainly show that there was something wrong in Thomas's mind ; else He would not have said to him, 'Be not faithless !' It is quite, however, according to what we all feel in our own hearts, if we suppose there were two feelings working together in Thomas's mind.

One, a bad one,—that, having been absent on the previous Sunday, when Christ showed Himself to the other disciples, he could not humble himself, and did not like to receive from others what most likely he could have received himself. And this is confirmed by the resolute language he uses about it,—' Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.'

And the other feeling that Thomas had in his mind probably was that he wished it to be true, as he said ; but the very eagerness of his desire became its own stumbling-block ; as light becomes too bright that we should look at it ; in fact it was 'too good to be true.'

Every one of us can sympathise with that state of mind where, upon the same subject, in the same moment, in the same mind, there is a double feeling. For, as there is no feeling so good that has not an alloy of sin, so there is no feeling so bad that may not be turned to good.

But take it either way, or both ways, there are many Thomases. One man waits till his reason is convinced. He is too philosophical to admit anything on such insufficient evidence.

Another thinks that God has not revealed things to him as He might. He fancies that God might speak to him in some more direct, personal manner ; and then he would believe.

While another feels it would be a very delightful thing indeed if it were true ; but he cannot bring his mind to think it possible that his salvation is so simple a thing, as if he only acknowledges himself a sinner, and believes Christ died for him, then he shall be immediately forgiven, and stand out a pardoned man, and accepted in the sight of God.

All these seem to say, in different shapes, 'I have never seen this. I have never seen anything like it. Therefore, I cannot believe it. I want further proof.'

In this way there are many Thomases.

The root of Thomas's error was this. Christ, before He died, had spoken more than once of His resurrection. He said He should rise again. If the Lord had not said that, Thomas might have been excused ;—then he would only have disbelieved man ; but now, when he was told that Christ had appeared, he was bound to recollect that he had heard Christ Himself say that. He was responsible to do it. And, against that word of Christ, he ought not to have allowed any

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consideration of sense or reason, if they appeared to run counter to it, to weigh one single feather.

He should have said to himself, ‘This mighty wonder is, after all, only that word of Christ.’ If he had not been proud, he would have said that: then he would have come in for the greater happiness which those enjoyed who had seen Christ suddenly appear within the closed doors on the previous Sunday:—‘Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.’

The inference is clear to us: whoever would have Christ’s blessing must feel, and show that he feels, the absolute claim, and the full sufficiency, and the entire supremacy of every word of God.

It does not appear that Thomas ever did thrust his hand into Christ’s side, though Christ told him to do it; and though he had said he would not believe till he had done it. Rather, it seems that, as soon as he saw and heard Christ, the spirit of the true child of God revived, and he did what every fallen man ought to do: he thought, ‘He is my Saviour still! Though I have grieved Him, He is my Saviour still.’ And he claimed Him by the use of those positives, which are the property of a believer,—‘My Lord! and my God!’ And that moment no doubt he was forgiven. Nevertheless, he had missed a good which could never be regained; a golden opportunity had slipped by: ‘Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.’

How often we see the same thing amongst us!

There is a young man who rushes into dissipation: he feels some checks at first; but he does not heed them. He overleaps the barriers of his own education: his passions are strong. That young man’s course runs downwards; and at last sin begins to bring before him its own necessary effects. He is careless about the things of God: he has a restless spirit; his heart grows hard; his mind becomes sceptical; he believes nothing.

Presently a sickness comes; or some calamity that has grown out of his vices, and he is startled to thought. He is beginning to pay one of those bitter penalties which God always attaches to an irregular life, and he begins to know that ‘the way of transgressors is hard’; and that ‘there is no peace to the wicked.’

He cannot help believing now. It is brought home to his experience. It touches him, and he sees it. How much happier would that young man have been, what miseries, what remorse, he would have been spared,—what horrid thoughts, which will cleave to him till death! what awful memories and associations!—if, years back, he had only taken God at His word,—and believed, when he said, ‘Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and

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in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment!—if he had read the inscription on virtue's head,—‘Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace!’ Because he has ‘seen,’ he ‘believes’; but ‘blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.’

Or let me follow another one, who is free from what the word calls ‘sin’; nevertheless, she has quaffed freely of ‘the cup of pleasure,’ and, for a while, as she drinks deeply of the intoxicating draught, she calls it ‘happiness.’ But let a few years pass, and look at her again. The amusements are becoming insipid to her; the joy has palled. The time of ‘the sting’ is coming. There is very little that gives her pleasure now, and nothing satisfaction. Many of those with whom she began life have passed off the scene! Things are much changed. The pulse no longer beats as once it beat; warning notes come warily; and death and eternity begin to look in at the windows!

The spell of the dream of life is beginning to break. Those retrospects, O how humbling! and those prospects, O how cheerless! she sees—she is made to see and confess ‘all is vanity’! She awakes to the consciousness that her life has been one grand mistake.

It may be, even now, she turns to Jesus, and she finds a forgiven sinner’s peace; washed in the cleansing blood of Christ. But who shall say what the difference might have been to that woman, a difference reaching on even to the determining of her eternal position, if, before she saw, she had ‘believed’; if she had listened to the Spirit, or ever she entered upon that treacherous path, when that Spirit whispered to her, ‘Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.’ ‘The time is short; it remaineth, that they that use this world use it as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.’ ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.’

She has ‘seen,’ and, thank God, she has ‘believed’; but she can never be as one who had given the freshness of her heart and her life to God. She has ‘seen’; but ‘blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.’

How often have I seen one trembling at the door of God’s free grace—and afraid to come in. ‘Surely,’ he says, ‘it cannot be for me. He can never love me after all I have done. He can never receive me with such a heart as mine. I cannot be pardoned so fully, and believe that God can ever really look on me with satisfaction!’

Presently God marvellously interposes on the behalf of that poor sinner. He shows Himself. But oh! what days, and weeks, and months, and years, perhaps, of fear and misery have been rolling on;

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and now that soul looks back, and wonders why it ever doubted. It seems to say, ‘O that I had accepted sooner one of those beautiful promises! O that I had never limited the Holy One of Israel! Would that I had come to Him at once, when He said, ‘Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out!’ Would that I had believed that ‘the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin.’ But now I have led such a useless life! I have done such dis-honour to my Saviour’s name! ‘Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.’

Learn to do homage to every letter of God’s Word. You cannot be too careful in satisfying yourself on its Inspiration. Do not leave a doubt on your mind of the perfect Inspiration of every word of God. You can do it almost by mathematical process. But when you have proved to yourself—once for all—the Inspiration of God’s Word—never admit the shadow of a doubt about it again. Receive it absolutely, even though it be almost contrary to your own experience.

I know no state of mind on earth which is for a moment to be compared, for peace, to the mind which is simply resting on the Word of God. That mind asks no causes, and traces no consequences. ‘It is enough! My God has said it. It is above me, and I cannot see it; it is beyond me, and I cannot reach it,—but my God has said it. I am less than the least,—but my God has said it, and He has said it to me.’

Then it is that the path gets clear, and there are no perplexities; then it is that the reason is obedient, and there are no cavillings; then it is that the affections are high, and there are no cloudings. Circumstances will have little power to distress; sorrows and temptations will not greatly move that man, because he has his foot upon a rock, he is living in the unseen. Fields of brighter joys than perhaps seeing angels ever saw, are around the vista of his faith, and presently eternity will seal the beatitude: ‘Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.’

J. VAUGHAN,
Sermons, Thirteenth Series, p. 133.

Rooted in Faith.

Ye believe in God, believe also in Me. S. JOHN xiv. 1.

TO speak of Faith is, indeed, to go back to first principles. For objectively, that is, looking out of ourselves, the matters Faith has to deal with are the first of all; such as the existence from all eternity of God, and then the Creation, the first revealed to us of all His works, and all His works from then till now; and subjectively,

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that is, looking into ourselves, Faith is not only the one requirement that God makes of us towards Himself, but in the nature of things it is the only faculty whereby we can have any intercourse with the unseen world ; nay, it is necessary for our primary acceptance of the dogma that there is a God. And yet, first principle as it is, common as the word is, who knows experimentally what Faith is ? who has tried to analyse it philosophically ? who has tested the quantity and quality of it in themselves ? Our blessed Lord once sorrowfully asked the question, ‘ When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth ? ’ and even a superficial observer would have little hesitation in saying that let the prevalent course of thought run on in its present groove, and there will be no long time before the gauge of Faith would indicate that if abounding unbelief be the sign of the times that are to witness the Second Advent of our Lord, then all is indeed being rapidly made ready for His coming.

I. Faith is a creating power. As the Will and Word of God out of nothing and perpetual night made the worlds to uprise, which had nevertheless existed eternally in the knowledge and power of God ; so Faith in a sense creates, at any rate makes to appear for us, those verities of the eternal which have ever existed within us and around us ; it makes for us the realities of the world to come out of things which hitherto have not appeared to us, and to them who have no faith do not appear.

And then the Creation is not only a grand picture and explanation of the way Faith works, but is also the first topic on which Faith can exercise itself. Here is the world around us ; nay, here am I myself. Whence came it ? whence came I ? What is to be the end of all ? Science—we ask, and she holds us in suspense with head, as it were, half averted, and intelligence looking witchingly out from beneath a cowl of ignorance ; she gives us guesses at the truth and leads us ever onward, arguing that she must be right evermore because she walks in the road which she assumed to be right at the first. But she only tells us of facts and deductions ; she knows nothing of motives, she guesses at the origin of life and rebels against the idea of an eternally existing Will. We ask of Faith, and she answers without hesitation, ‘ By the word of the Lord were the heavens made ; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.’ ‘ He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast.’

And every day as we look on waving forest or stormy sea, each night that we see the countless orbs of heaven looking down like sleepless eyes upon the earth, each hour we hear the unseen wind, or measure our movements by the changeless flight of time, we have a sacrament around us of the creative power of God. The rule we began with reacts upon our souls ; the appearing of the creature

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world out of the void of darkness showed us a figure of how faith acts ; the appearance round us of the things we see tells us of all beyond ; speaks by its mere existence of its First Great Cause, and aids our faith in recognising the Divine Creator and Preserver of the whole. But granted all this—and few of those here present will deny it theoretically at any rate—we must not stop here. ‘Ye believe in God,’ said our blessed Lord, ‘believe also in Me.’ We have not to deal with cold abstraction ; the lovable, and therefore the personal is continually brought before us by a merciful God.

II. The new creation gives us the great absorbing topic of our faith. In the new creation, of which Jesus Christ is the Head, the Father willed and sent Him ; the Holy Ghost descended in ineffable mystery on the Holy Virgin, and the Incarnate Word was born a man. This is the great object of the Christian faith, and thus too the creative power of faith is evident. Creative, so far as it makes evident to us that which sense cannot verify, nor reason explain : a dark, a void, as regards spiritual matters, is the mind of him who has no faith. That power exerts itself, and there is a world called into being.

Faith in Christ draws us to Him, makes us like Him. Let us judge ourselves by the standard of our life’s resemblance to His how much we really believe in Him.

G. C. HARRIS,

Sermons, p. 170.

Unconscious Knowledge.

And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. S. JOHN xiv. 4.

OUR Lord here asserts of His disciples, that they know whither He goes and the way to it. Thomas replies that they know not whither He is going, and therefore do not know the way.

Again our Lord declares they have known and seen the Father, but Philip replies by ‘Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.’

Thus our Lord declares them to have a knowledge of which they do not appear to be conscious, and to possess a secret which they disown with all simplicity. This is one of those universal facts which the New Testament history illustrates. Of all men it may be said that they do really and truly know many things of which they are, or seem to be, ignorant, till some discovery of themselves is made to themselves. We say to one who swears, You know it is wrong to take God’s name in vain. Moreover, events in life seem to penetrate to a soil through many strata, and reveal a well of emotion which springs up unto life. It is certain that we *are* more than we think we are, and that moments of conviction are bestowed on all—moments

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of knowledge, of self-knowledge—when the most sensual and ignorant know that they are not all body, that their nature has a spiritual side, with its aspirations, hopes, and fears. Were any one to announce to us the moral facts and conclusions of which we have had occasional glimpses, to press on us the views we have really taken of our destiny, we should probably disclaim the representation of our various moods when strongly made, and say, ‘I know not the man.’ Every one is, probably, better and worse than he knows. Peter did not know *that* Peter whom Christ described as about to deny his Lord. The Syrian chieftain started at himself as Elisha showed him to himself. One touch, by a master hand, makes a great difference in the colouring. We see things, truths, persons in a certain light; an added ray, a stronger vision makes all new. And as it may be said of any one who passes an ordinary day in society, in nature, or among books, that he sees many things, observes many rare objects, hovering only on the brink of their infinite worth and excellence; not dead to them by any means, but needing one little hint or ray of light to make him hoard what he only a little prizes; so in the great world of eternal realities of the spirit, it is true that our knowledge, while it is greater than we think, needs the finger of the Master to point out decisively to us what we do really know, to discover to us the extent of our convictions and conclusions.

Thus it is easy to perceive how the confusion of mind in the disciples, in prospect of their loss, darkened their knowledge. What they really knew became uncertain in the night of trouble.

They knew, as we know, that trial, discipline, is good for a man—that the way to life is through death; but they felt as we feel when the trial comes home, and the announcement of the end is real—as though some strange thing had happened.

Again, Philip’s ‘Shew us the Father’ is an illustration of the same fact—that a man may think he does not know what he really does know—what, if brought to serious thoughtfulness, he would allow that he knew. He had seen the Father. We do not know of any other image of the invisible God than that given us in His Son. The Son reveals the Father as far as it is possible for us to know or see Him. ‘He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.’ He knew, then, more than he thought he knew, had a vision of the Father such as he had not surmised, and is in this an illustration of all of us. We have had glimpses of Divine truth, convictions of the Divine presence, and have them now, greater and deeper than we suspect. We need only a power of illumination, and steadfastness of gaze into our actual knowledge, to make us silent with wonder and praise.

We may unwittingly contradict our better selves in several ways, which I shall attempt to illustrate.

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I. We may disown our own knowledge of the great secret, the open secret of the dispensation of the Spirit.

In the constant fight with temptation, in the deadly pressure of the spirit of self-will, and compromise, and evasion of duty, it seems to us all, at times, as though we knew nothing of the indwelling Lord of the house. But there standeth One whom we know not ; yet we do really know Him. He keeps alive the fire on the altar ; He prompts the contrite thought and prayer ; He gives the good hope that never dies away in the thick of the fight ; 'He teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight.' When we fall, it is through Him that we rise again. The sore anguish, the godly sorrow, the 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' is His creation. The being established in the conviction that all is not lost while the very will to strive against self-will is in us, that conflict is not the accident but the condition of true life here, that is His seal. By this we know that He knows us.

II. Again, when the light of true evidence burns low, who has not sighed for some sensible proof of an interest in Christ ? 'Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.'

We ignore our rank and title as sons of God, and seem to walk about in rags, because we forget, or appear to forget, the very elements of our faith. We do really know the faith, but we suspect ourselves ; we know, yet do not know, that we are forgiven and accepted in Christ. Like men with great riches, yet occupied with a delusion, we see only drudgery before us as a means of securing a livelihood. There is now with us the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who holds with us the selfsame relation which our Lord held with His disciples. He will meet our alarms, our queries, as Christ met the question of Thomas ; He will reveal no new truth, He will simply reveal to you what you know ; He will make you know what you know ; those things of Christ, which a thousand times you have confessed, He will show to you.

III. We unconsciously deny our knowledge of what we know when God's great gift of immortality is neglected. Esau knew his birth-right, yet knew it not. He despised it for a mess of pottage. How carelessly and idly do we walk, endowed with such a nature, with such possibilities in us, through this time-scene, which we nevertheless allow not to be the 'be-all and the end-all' ! How many disown themselves, as it were declaring themselves to be what they are not, what, in cool reflection, they acknowledge they are not ! That busy man who works out his little day of engagements and pleasures and profits, that is *not you*. That angry discontent with present advancement, that perpetual craving for a deeper draught of the cup of mammon or of Belial, that feverish thirst for station and family

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promotion—these might be all flung away. ‘It is the worser part of the heart which you might throw away, and live the purer with the other half.’

Do not disavow your lineage. Do not ignore the Divine image in you. Do not hide from your clear vision the side of your nature which neighbours on heaven and God. Rather ask for insight into the depths of which you now only guess. Ask to have that made real, of which you now only dream.

B. KENT,

The Pastor's Note-Book, p. 71.

Faith and Inquiry.

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came, etc. S. JOHN XX. 24-29.

AMONG the many surprising things connected with Christ, this, at first sight, seems almost as surprising as any—the number of men of such different characters that He gathered around Him. A modern teacher collects about him men of like turns and tastes with himself. If he is a man of intellect, it is men of intellect that gather about him; if he is a man of feeling, it is the tender-hearted and sympathetic. But Christ gathered round Him men of every class, alike the tender and the severe, alike the credulous and the hard to convince. And considering who He was the thing ceases to be wonderful. The greatest of men are generally men of only one side. It is because they have only one side often that they are accounted great. They have some one quality or phase of mind or thought in perfection, and all who possess this quality in a less degree admire and follow them. But Christ was not a man of one side but of all sides. All found what they sought in Him, and that which He said would be true of Him when He was lifted up was felt even before—that He drew all men unto Him. And it is not amiss for us to desire to know how those were influenced who were immediately about Christ, and formed that small body of His disciples containing such a variety of character that in some one of them each of us may find a mind akin to his own and a history and life which may be helpful to him in shaping his own life and history.

I. The point which the incident here illustrates appears to be this. It is the case of a man who had believed in Christ very sincerely, though, perhaps, not very intelligently or with great breadth of view, over whose mind there came through the events of Providence a great darkness, but who yet emerged out of this darkness into clearer light than ever he had known before. The history of his unbelief is recorded in verses 24-25, and of his faith in verses 26-29. As to his *unbelief*. In judging the conduct of the Apostle

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here, it is very necessary, if we would judge him fairly, to have some conception of what kind of person he was, what natural disposition and temperament he possessed. It is probable that as Jesus chose only twelve disciples He chose persons of distinct and marked character, so that the truth of the Gospel might in after ages shine among men, not with one colour of light only, but in many colours; and in judging men's conduct we need to know not only their circumstances, but, above all, their type of mind. We need to know this even in judging of their religious conduct, for religion does not alter the natural cast of a man's mind, it only sanctifies and consecrates the natural disposition. The man who was impulsive before still remains impulsive, and will act impulsively in religious things, though he may be taught gradually to guard himself against his impulsiveness. The man who is despondent and melancholic by nature will not be immediately transplanted into a clear air and summer sky by his faith, although his natural disposition may to a certain extent be corrected by the many hopes set before him in the Gospel, and even more by the healthy activity into which it sets his feelings. At all events, in forming an opinion of men's actions, we should endeavour to get behind the actions if possible and look at the men themselves, and judge their actions by what we have learned to know of the men rather than, as we are more inclined to do, judge the men from their actions, or, oftentimes indeed, from a single action.

Now perhaps this Apostle has suffered somewhat in this way, by people judging of a single action alone and without inquiry into his particular type of mind, in which the key to his conduct no doubt lies. Many in the Church have for ages branded him as an infidel, but this judgment is not justified by the facts and cannot be entertained by us in these days. At all times, and even to this day, we have been quite ready to scatter epithets of that sort about us with an open hand. It is an easy and a pleasant way of disposing of men; but it is often a shallow enough device. We show thereby but little insight into the nature, either of men or of God. If we could look into the hearts of those whom we see flying away from us, we should often find deep enough sorrows there, troubles to which we ourselves are strangers, wrestlings for truth and light without yet receiving it, and yearnings pent up and hidden from the general view. This Apostle was confused rather than disbelieving, and his confusion was due more, perhaps, to defect of character rather than badness of heart. He was a man, and there are such men still, who heart was, so to speak, a better instrument than his head, and thns he drank in the Lord's teaching and life into his soul faster than he could frame it into conceptions in his mind; and in the fellowship of his God, though he knew it not, he lived a charmed and enchanted life, dreaming rather

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than thinking, and when that out of which he drew his life was taken away from him, he was bewildered, and hardly knew where his conflicting feelings were carrying him.

And not more true in regard to his character, I think, is that other conception of him, which has of late taken the place of this former harsher one, which speaks of him as a man of sharp wits and shrewd in his dealings with the world, suspicious of being imposed upon, subjecting all things to a rigid scrutiny, knowing the many disguises of evil among men ; a man who must not only see with his eyes, but feel with his fingers, before he gives anything a place among the objects in which he has faith. That may be a very useful type of mind, though it cannot, perhaps, be called a very lofty one, and this Apostle does not seem, at all events, to have shared it. On two other occasions besides the present he speaks, and there we find, perhaps, the key to his character. When Christ, for the last time before His dying, spoke to His disciples of going away, more than one questioned Him. Philip and Judas (not Iscariot) with clear articulate questioning, Thomas with only a stammering tongue. Christ had assumed that His disciples knew the Father. But Philip says, 'Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us.' It is around the Father that the thickest darkness gathers. It is after Him that human nature craves. It is to Him that the heart of mankind swells, like the tide under the drawing of the heavens. Could we but be shown Him its restlessness would for ever be composed. Why will we not hear the words of Christ : 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father'? With Thomas, however, there was no such clearness of mind. Jesus had spoken of going away, and the thought of that puts an end to his power of following thought any more. He can but exclaim. 'We know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?'

The other occasion on which he speaks is that in connection with the death of Lazarus. When Jesus said, 'Let us go into Judæa again,' Thomas replied : 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him.' Now it is not quite clear who it is he proposes there to die with, whether with Christ or Lazarus—probably with Christ—but his peculiar temperament comes out equally well with both interpretations. If it is with Lazarus he proposes to die, this truth, you perceive, has quite paralysed the mind. Life has nothing more to give him. His brethren remain, his Master remains, but all that remains is obscured and forgotten in the loss of that which has been taken away. If it is with Christ that he will die, as most likely, you equally well perceive the reasoning of despondency. The disciples remonstrated with Christ on the idea of going to Judæa again. 'The Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?' They dreaded the consequence, but what was but sad fear of a fatal

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issue to them, was certainty to Thomas. Of course there could be but one result if the Lord returned into Judæa again, and He was bent upon going—‘Let us also go that we may die with Him.’ Thus the prevailing character of this man’s mind seems to have been a certain tendency to despond, a certain want of buoyancy of mind, and this, coupled, perhaps, with a certain sensitiveness, and, it may or may not be, not without that self-will and obstinacy which many times goes with too great delicacy of feeling. He was the kind of man one often sees in the East—of a gloomy, dark exterior, to appearance without any emotion, yet fervid and fiery within, like a stream of lava, over which there lies a hard crust, upon which you may walk, but within there flows the flood of molten fire.

II. And now, consider what awful loss he had sustained in the death of his Master, more awful and perplexing because what was lost was not, perhaps, just fully understood, what stream of blessing had left his heart dry, what fulness of light had been eclipsed to his eyes, what hopes of a restored Israel (we trusted it had been He which should have redeemed Israel), and with a restored Israel a redeemed world. These hopes had been gradually rising. Every miracle of Christ had been giving body to them. For these years there had floated before the minds of such men as the Apostle a gorgeous fabric of dominion and glory for Israel, with Christ as universal King, and His followers high in rank in the kingdom. Now the fabric had been shattered to the ground. There was that tendency to be overcome by misfortune that was habitual to the Apostle. We do not wonder that he abandoned the fellowship of the little company of the Apostles.

He was a man, perhaps, easily impressed, and impression had a strong hold over him. An impression was to him far stronger evidence than any amount of testimony from others. The impression he was under now was that he had been at the crucifixion, and saw all that went on ; he saw the Saviour raised upon the tree, the nails driven home, and the spear thrust in ; he saw it all, and felt it all ; he saw the Saviour bleed and die. The whole picture fastened itself upon his mind ; it was a constant impression he carried about with him, and from this vivid impression he speaks. He reads off the whole outline of it from his mind, feature by feature—the nails, the spear, the hands and side, all the evidence of death—and until this impression be removed by another impression, nothing will make the man believe.

III. Note Thomas’s faith. After eight days the disciples were again assembled and Thomas with them. How they had induced him to come we do not know. I daresay they did not argue or debate much with him, but they laid their own faith before him—

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their own strong conviction. This he saw, and was moved by them. They did not cast him off. They brought the strength of their own faith and example to bear on him, and he came—in what mind we do not know—doubting still, no doubt, certainly with a divided mind at first, between his own want of experience and the strongly asserted experience of others.

Thomas came with a purpose to examine the wounds of the Lord. He was bent on reading the evidences of Christianity as we say. It does not appear that he carried his purpose into effect. The evidences were offered to him, but somehow in their being offered there was offered something larger. In his mind it was to be a matter of hands and fingers. He would be a Christian through his senses of touch and sight. He was suddenly made aware that he had a larger sense, a sense belonging to his whole being—an eye and a hand, not the organs of one faculty, but of his heart, which brought, not the wounds of Christ, but Christ Himself close to him.

He thought about his hands and about some marks on the Lord. He suddenly found it was not about his hands the question was, but about himself, about his heart, his life, his being; not about the Saviour's scars, but about the Saviour Himself, his Lord, his God. It was another evidence and another effect he found, another proof from that which he sought, carrying with it a conclusion far greater than he had ever imagined, that took a broader hold of him, a hold of his whole being: My Lord and my God!

A. B. DAVIDSON,
Christian World Pulpit, vol. xxxvii. p. 260.

Jesus shows Himself to His Disciples.

The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. S. JOHN xx. 19, 20.

ALMOST everything that our blessed Lord did, while He was dwelling on earth, was, so to say, a living parable, a likeness of what He is always doing, of what He is always ready to do, for such as believe in Him. While the actions of men pass away, just glance across our sight, like falling stars, and vanish in a moment, the Saviour's actions are like the true stars, which stand fast in the heavens for ever; and if we cast our eyes upward, when the dazzling glare of the world has faded from our sight, and we look up to heaven in silent meditation, there we behold them ever shining, ever shedding their calm light upon us. Above all is this true of those most interesting stories which are recorded of our Saviour's various

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appearances to His disciples after His resurrection. When He showed Himself to them, He showed Himself not to them only, but to the faithful throughout all time.

I. We, like the disciples, have often forsaken our Lord and Master. We too have often lost Him. We may have forsaken Him through fear of the world. We may have forsaken Him to run after vanities. We may have forsaken Him to follow the devices of our own hearts. At such seasons, when we are weighed down with the consciousness of having forsaken our Lord, the tempter will come to us, and having already gained a hold on our hearts, will try to make sure of his prey. He will assail us with doubts, with fear, with shame. At such dark, dreary seasons we should assemble together, as the disciples did, shutting out the whole family of sin—all worldly thoughts, all worldly cares, all worldly and carnal lusts—these are the Jews that crucified Christ, these are the Jews that still crucify Him, that still draw away His disciples from Him, and tempt and lure them to forsake Him, and would sever them from Him for ever. These are the Jews against whom you are to shut your doors.

II. If you do thus assemble together, you will see Jesus come and stand in the midst of you. ‘Peace be unto you.’ Into whatsoever house Christ enters, these are the first words He speaks to that house. To whatsoever heart Christ manifests Himself, this is the blessed salutation with which He tries to win the heart, to receive Him and to abide with Him.

J. C. HARE,

Herstmonceux Sermons, vol. i. p. 193.

The Christian Mission.

S. JOHN xx. 21-23.

MAN is in every way made to labour; and to numberless calls of duty which summon him to do so. When he gives heed to those calls, and obeys them by labouring diligently and heartily, then after a while he is allowed to enjoy seasonable rest, and he finds pleasures to sweeten that rest. But the pleasures, to be sound, must only come now and then, else he will lose all relish for them. They should be like the blossoms, which the tree puts forth here and there for a short season; while the labours in the path of duty should be like the leaves, clothing it all over and for a continuance.

I. And as it is with all other joys, so is it likewise with spiritual joys. They, too, are vouchsafed to us now and then, for a time, to refresh and cheer the heart, and to kindle it with a foretaste of those everlasting joys, which await the faithful in the presence of God. But as our blessed Lord Himself, after hearing the voice from heaven,

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went forth to enter upon His ministry, so will all those who have, indeed, received Christ into their hearts as their Saviour, hear His voice sending them to work for Him, even as He sent the disciples. It was not good for the disciples that He should abide with them always. It was good for them that He should go away and leave them for a time, so that they should no longer walk by sight, but by faith, and that they might learn to know that He was always with them, even though they did not see Him with their bodily eyes. To all Christ gives the same charge; He sends all to work the work of God.

II. He sends them, however, not as to a labour, a toil, a painful, unwilling service, a service of compulsion and fear, troubled by doubts and anxieties. He sends them to work the work of God as children of God, with the peaceful feeling of being reconciled to God and received into His family:—to find their chief pleasure in working the work with no constraint upon them, except the blessed constraint of God. Consider, too, what a work it is on which Christ sends His servants. It is no mean, bootless, painful drudgery, like much of the labour of this world, wherein we have often to serve worthless masters, when the fruits of our works are uncertain, and where so large a part of them scarcely outlast it. The work on which Christ sends us is God's work. This thought alone is enough to enoble any task we may be set to. God is the Master whom we are serving; the harvest is certain, will be plentiful and precious, and will last for ever. It is a work, too, in which we are fellow-labourers with the angels; nay, it is a work in which we are called to be fellow-workers with the Son of God Himself. This is the blessed charge which Christ lays upon all such as have been gladdened by the sight of Him as their Saviour,—they are to call others to come to Him. This is their first duty, and this must needs be their chief joy. It is the glorious and beautiful task of Christ's servants to shed light and to foster spiritual life, whithersoever they go, a light and life that will endure for ever.

J. C. HARE,
Herstmonceux Sermons, vol. i. p. 209.

Christmas Day

EPISTLE	HEB. I. 1-12.
GOSPEL	S. JOHN I. 1-14.
FIRST MORNING LESSON .	ISAIAH IX. 1-8.
SECOND MORNING LESSON .	S. LUKE II. 1-15.
FIRST EVENING LESSON .	ISAIAH VII. 10-17.
SECOND EVENING LESSON .	TITUS III. 4-9.

I. COMPLETE SERMONS

The Angels' Song

On earth, Peace. S. LUKE ii. 14.



TAKE first the keystone of the angel's arch of triumph. 'Glory' supports it on the one side, and 'Love' on the other. And here they meet; and here they find the bond which fastens them in one: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, Peace, Good-will toward men.'

But what did the heavenly choir mean? They could not mean that, at that moment, there *was*

'Peace on the earth.'

Was it a prayer? 'May there be Glory to God in the highest, and may there be Peace on earth, and may there be Good-will toward men!'

Or was it prophecy? Did they foresee that the time would come that this would be the blessed condition of our world?—a time not yet arrived.

Or did they recognise—in that little Infant—the germ of that excellent Trinity of 'Glory, Peace, and Love'? and did they call Him by the titles which He wears in heaven—'the Father's Glory, —the World's Peace,—and Universal Love'?

The angel, who led the band, had spoken of Joy, only Joy, 'great Joy,' prophetic Joy, 'which should be to all people,' a Joy prophetic still. But the rushing 'multitude of the angel host' carried the note higher, and gave no limit of time; and they did not say Joy, but Peace—'Peace on earth.'

Is it that, even to an angel's mind, Peace is above Joy? Or was it that they thought and knew that this was what our world most

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wanted? They had been accustomed to look upon the Peace of heaven, where everything has found its resting-place, and everything is calm: where there is not a sound which is not like the flow of waters: where a discordant note is never heard: where all hearts are in one sweet concord: where all is dovelike gentleness!

No wonder, then, that they drew their anthems from the scenes they lived in, and from the mournful contrast in the world they were visiting, and that they chose such characteristics of the Advent as to them were the most familiar, and the dearest,—God's Praise; a world of Peace; a Saviour's Love!

We have to do now only with *Peace*. And the stress lies in the words 'On earth.' No marvel if there should be Peace in heaven. No angel would care to proclaim a thing so certain. But this was the marvel,—this was the grace,—this was the wonder,—this was the strange burden of the song, 'Peace on earth.' A 'Peace' that has sadly left us since that day when sin came in!

Observe the course of the facts of our world's history.

Adam and Eve, who till that moment were as one, now wrangled which is the guiltiest!

The first death upon this earth is fratricide; and the murdering brother, in his callous heart, cares nothing!

The whole world is at enmity with God; and, save a few elect of every kind, every creature perishes in one vast engulfing flood!

The earliest building upon record ends in a confusion, and is stamped a Babel!

Even Abraham and Lot have to part; and Isaac quarrels with Ishmael; and Jacob with Esau; and Joseph has no peace with his brethren; Moses himself, the meekest man, is wrathful even to the point of wicked speaking; and the whole history of the chosen people of God is one continuous record of wars the bloodiest! The very disciples of Jesus contend for the primacy, calling down fire! And 'the Prince of Peace' finds no peace at the hands of those He came to save.

And of what is every page of the narrative of nations full but with jealousies, and hatred, and cruel fightings? The temple of Janus only three times closed in the long roll of the Roman era.

Peace, at little intervals, just spreading its timid wing, and then flying back affrighted from the scene.

And what have we now? True, England is almost at peace with the whole world, and we accept it gratefully—as God's precious Christmas gift to us this year! but who can see the vast armaments which fill the Continent, and the tremendous power of the instruments of war, increasing everywhere, and call it 'Peace'?

Or, if you go into an inner circle, where is the household without a jar? where is the family of which every member is in perfect unison?

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Who has not some one with whom he is not quite on terms of love ? How many are there who are at 'perfect peace' with themselves ? How many with God ?

'Peace on earth !' where is it ? Where does she hide herself ? Is she in the valleys ? Is she among the mountains ? Is she in the high places of kings ? Is she in the cottage ? Is she in the Church ? Is she, as she ought to be, in any one single man that walks this earth ?

Or, is it 'Peace' only in the angels' song, in the far vision of celestial intelligences, and the womb of the future ?

Here and there, some chosen ones have its earhests. It is breaking on the horizon. A few streaks tell that 'the Sun of Righteousness is rising, with healing in His wings.' He is coming ! The angels saw it. He is coming. 'Peace, peace, to him that is near, and to him that is afar off.' Already, 'He maketh peace in His high places'; and 'the council of Peace is between them both.' The legacy of Jesus is 'Peace.' That legacy must be paid. 'Of the increase of that Peace there shall be no end.' 'He shall reign—the Prince of Peace.' There shall be Peace over the whole earth. And when that day comes every inhabitant of this earth will verify the angels' words, addressed to Him who was born this day, the Babe of Bethlehem, and subscribe to those 'watchers' testimony—'Peace on earth !'

But what is 'Peace' ? The after creation, the rest of the soul, the concord of hearts, the reflection of heaven, the image of God.

We must examine it more closely. It is human peace the angels sang : 'Peace on earth.' What is the peace of a man ?

Let us open its foldings.

First, there must be *peace with God*. God has said it universally, 'There shall be no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' How can there be peace in the soul so long as a man is not reconciled to his Maker ?

Strange word—'Peace with God !' Then, if there is now peace, there has been war. War with God ! War of a worm with Omnipotence ! Yet so it was, and so it is, and so it would be for ever, if the Daysman had not come and laid His hand upon us both. He, and He only, is 'Peace.' And he who has Him has peace.

People say, 'Make your peace with God.' *Make your peace with God !* You can *never* make your peace with God. But accept Christ, and you accept Peace. The Gospel is the treaty : the angels' song, as this morning, was its herald : that light upon the hills was its flag of truce : the love of the Father drew the treaty : the blood of Christ sealed the treaty, and the contracting parties are an eternal God of truth and every rebel man who lays down his arms, and puts his hand to the contract, and professes 'Jesus only.'

Made by that peace with God—within it, and a part of it, is the

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peace of the conscience, a sprinkled conscience. The language of that conscience is, 'I believe—I feel—I know that I am forgiven. I am simply nothing but a poor, poor sinner, forgiven; but whatever happens to me now, my affairs stand right with God. He has said it, and I take it, "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus"; and there, by the infinite grace of God, I have placed myself, and I now am.'

They talk of '*Christmas pleasures*'! What are they all to that sense of safety, that deep, inward peace? Can there be 'pleasure' if there is no peace? Could the Israelites sit down to the Paschal banquet, with the angel of death in the air, and no blood upon the door? Can you enjoy life if you are not ready to 'meet with God,' who may come in upon the Christmas revel?

Be sure that you have peace with your own conscience,—the peace of a witness within that you are in Christ,—that you love Christ,—that you would not willingly do anything to grieve Christ: that your own heart knows, in your own poor way, your first wish, your great end in life, is to please and serve and glorify Christ.

And that is a man's peace with man; and if he have that, that man is sure to try to be at peace with everybody.

Why are some persons so irritable, and so uncomfortable with everybody? They are uncomfortable in their own breast; they are not at peace with God,—therefore they are not at peace with themselves; and therefore they cannot be at peace with any one.

But peace makes peace. Peace with God in the soul makes peace in the soul, and peace in the soul makes peace with the world.

So we trace the structure of that great word 'peace,' and uncoil the links of that triple chain, which first unites man with God,—then man with himself,—and then man with his fellow.

Oh that this 'peace' may be God's own Christmas gift—the peace of a Christ born in the low places of your own poor, mean, wicked heart: a Christ known,—a Christ consciously your own,—a Christ reflected in a life of self-sacrificing forgiveness and love to every one. Put peace into your motto.

Don't let this season pass without some distinct act of peace.

Do you happen to know in the world any two persons who are not at peace? Go and be a peacemaker between them, and get the beatitude.

Have you yourself any one between whom and you there is a variance and a distance? Take occasion by this festival of love to say the word,—to write the letter,—to do the act,—which shall heal the wound and restore peace.

Or, better still, in some secret moment—by some silent act—make the sacrifice of something, something which your conscience tells you

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to be wrong—a darling habit which stands between you and God, which is, at your better moments, your burden.

Let Christ who is ‘our peace’ become more to you, more real,—more dear,—more trusted, and more confessed among men. And then, perhaps, some angel seeing that Christ in you, and you in Him,—may tune his harp, and sing again, to-day, over you, that ancient note—‘Peace on earth !’

J. VAUGHAN,

Sermons, Twelfth Series, p. 205.

The Humility of Christ’s Nativity.

He humbled Himself. PHILIPPIANS ii. 8.

I HAVE asked myself, Which is the first great leading thought of Christmas Day ? And the answer I find is,—Either ‘love’ or ‘humility’; but chiefly ‘humility.’ For the ‘love’ was from eternity; the ‘humiliation’ began now. Nevertheless, they are almost the same thing. It would be no ‘love’ that did not ‘humble’ itself, and real ‘humility’ is always ‘affectionate.’ ‘Love’ and ‘humility’ are very nearly synonymous.

It would be a grand resolve—if any one would resolve to begin with Christmas Day, to try to copy, consecutively, the whole life of Jesus: to go with Him gradually up, commencing with His birth and infancy; following His boyhood; walking in the steps of His manhood,—acting, suffering, speaking, praying, thinking as far as possible as He did; and then copying Him in His death, when we come to die; and looking forward to be like Him in our resurrection-glory.

Could there be a greater consecration of Christmas Day ? Could there be a better day to commence, or re-commence the spiritual, Christlike life, with a full purpose, step by step, to carry it on exactly as Jesus did; taking that model, and working it out, day by day, in something of the order in which that life lies before us ?

And it would help our effort if we made up our minds that we would set out on such a day as this. And the idea of exactly going in the track of that life,—imitating another and another trait and characteristic of it,—and endeavouring to run into and approach that parallel,—would give a definiteness, and limit, and fixedness, to the undertaking which would be very helpful to accuracy and reality.

Let me recommend to you, this morning, to begin, or re-begin, this very day, with the beginning; to take in hand a new life, which shall exactly follow His, keeping the eye always on the copy. I can

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conceive nothing more honouring to Christ, nothing better to secure a religious life.

And now for the commencement. The first thing is, you must be born: your soul must be born. He was born.

The life which we follow—the only life we have really to do with—was a life which dates from this day. For it is not the Divine and Eternal life of Christ which so much concerns us; it is His human life.

We cannot, of course, draw boundary lines between the two lives and the two natures of Jesus Christ. But it is in His human life that He was born, and that He died for us. And it is His human life in which we are to be like Him. It is the human life by which we are to live for ever.

We have very little to do with the Divine life of Christ. It is out of our reach. It is not the Son of God, it is the Son of Man that we know. And this is what it means when it says: 'In Him was life'—man's life, human life, our life here and for ever;—'and the life'—the human—'is the life of men.'

You must be born then. You have had a previous life. So had He. But He took a new and different life. So must you. Very new! Very different! He was born to His. You must be born to yours. And, like His, you must take care that it is quite a man's life; natural life, with all human feelings.

But it must have another and a higher side—spiritual, heavenly: that side is of God; and that heavenly side must give its character to the other, the human side. You may have nature for your mother, but God for your Father.

It is not, however, with the new birth, generally, that I have to do now. I desire to set before you, for your study, one special feature, without which the new birth is nothing:—'The Humility of the Nativity of Christ.' 'He humbled Himself.'

Depend upon it, it is the great, I might almost say, the only thing we want. It is the secret of conversion. It is the first step of a new life. It is all the steps to heaven—going lower; a deeper sense of sin; a feeling of nothingness; a confession of helplessness; a babe-like state.

Of Jesus's 'humiliation' it would be hard to say where it began, or where it ends.

It was 'humiliation,' in heaven—when He undertook His self-abasing mission, and consented to leave His Father's house, to visit this world. 'Lo! I come.'

It was 'humiliation'—when, as He stood on the threshold of that higher world, He emptied Himself, for a season, of the attributes and the immunities of His Godhead, and reduced Himself—(that

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He might be a Representative in nature, and a Brother in sympathy),—to the level of man !

It was ‘humiliation’—when He appeared, a little babe,—in a little manger,—in a little village,—in a little country,—in this little planet !

It was ‘humiliation’—to lie—Himself, the Omnipotent that filled the universe,—in the swaddling clothes of infants !

To receive the highest honours—which this earth could lay at His feet,—of ‘gold, and frankincense, and myrrh,—was ‘humiliation’ for Him !

It was ‘humbling’—to be the mark of the miserable jealousy of a petty king, and to flee, for His life, from a Herod !

It was ‘humbling’—to submit to a painful and slavish ordinance !

It was ‘humbling’—to learn as a boy,—to be obedient as a boy,—to work as a boy,—and wait, with that ardent mind of His, those strange thirty years !

But, more ‘humbling’—still, it was to make friends of men so illiterate, so vulgar, so unspiritual, so unsympathising, so untrue !

It was ‘humbling’—to be in constant contact—that Pure and Holy One,—with sin and suffering every day.

‘Humbling’—to have to teach so patiently, again and again, minds so unworthy and so dull !

‘Humbling’—to depend every day, and every night, upon charity—for every crumb He ever ate,—for the very clothes He wore, and the bed He lay on !

‘Humbling’—to carry about with Him a body of weakness and weariness, in His long walks—and His high-wrought tension of body and of soul !

And very ‘humbling’ it must have been to do all this, and bear all this, and then see so very little fruit !

And how shall I speak of those closing ‘humiliations’ of that ‘humiliated’ life, which make our very cheeks to burn with indignation and with shame ? The mockery ! the spitting ! the smiting ! the jesting ! That dear, dear meek One, to stand, the butt of Herod’s malice and Pilate’s contemptuous scepticism !

The utter loneliness and desolation—in that great crowd, without one mind of beating sympathy,—Oh ! the contrast to those hosts of heaven, where every eye shall rivet itself on Him, and every knee shall bow !

And then to be with those dark evil spirits ; to be crushed for a moment ; and to permit them to torment Him who, for others’ sakes, had the sword driven through Him for *their* evil deeds !

And then that mean, dark, cruel death, unrelieved by one ray of tenderness ! and that black eclipse ! And the grave, though conquered, dark ! And then forty days again of work and loneliness !

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And what shall we say more? Why, the very body He carries now in heaven is a 'humiliation.' 'He humbled Himself.'

It was all a voluntary act. Said I not right that love is humility, and that humility is love? Are not they the same thing? 'He humbled Himself.'

Let me draw your attention to one or two points in the 'humiliation' of Christ.

It was all done, in the full sense, all along, that He was God's child. With the exception of a moment or two, He never lost the fullest conviction that His Father loved Him. Humanly speaking, He could not have done and borne all He did and suffered without it! It was this sustained Him.

It was part of Christ's 'humiliation' (it was only one interruption—if it were an interruption—and that but for a moment) to doubt that He was God's own dear Son!

And you will never be really 'humble' until you feel, and are quite sure, that God loves you. It is no humility to doubt that. That abases God, not you. On the contrary, the way to be 'humble' is to begin by accepting the assurance that you are forgiven, accepted, loved; and the more you feel loved, the 'humbler' you will always be. It is so crushing to be loved so dearly and so undeservingly!

If you would be like Christ in His 'humiliation,' you must, like Him, receive it, and remember it, and never let go of it, wonderful as it is—'I am a child of God.' And what is wanted to make you a child of God? I repeat it—'humiliation.' To go very low, and put Christ very high. So love and humility act and react. 'Humility' introduces you to 'love,' and 'love' gives you back to 'humility.'

But there is another point. Christ 'humbled Himself' to God before He 'humbled Himself' to man: as we have seen, the beginning of 'humiliation' was the consent in heaven to the Father's will.

Remember this. It may be, at this moment, there is some providence which you find it very difficult to accept and to bear 'humbly.' Do not try first to 'humble' yourself to it, but go and 'humble' yourself to the God of the providence. See God as a sinner, see God as a forgiven sinner, pardoned; then go and 'humble' yourself to the providence.

Or it may be, that there is some person to whom you know you ought, and to whom you really wish, but to whom you feel quite unable to 'humble' yourself at this moment. The road, the only road to it, is to place yourself very low before God. Realise what you are to Him! How you have provoked Him! How much more you have provoked Him than that man has provoked you! Then you will be able to go down and stoop, and kiss his feet.

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The only way to make an earthly relationship right, is first to adjust the heavenly one. Like Christ, be 'humble' to God, and then you will be prepared to 'humble' yourself, to any extent, to any providence, or to any creature in the whole world.

Christ's 'humility' never paraded itself. It never talked of itself. Once or twice He said to this effect: 'I am among you as he that serveth.' But that was all. If you had been with Him, you would scarcely have seen that He was 'humbling' Himself at all. It was so free from all assumption of 'humility,'—so apparently not condescension at all: so manly: so sensible: so consistent!

Never show you are 'humbling' yourself. Let others discover it; but do you never exhibit it. It loses all its grace and beauty if it is once seen to be stooping. Not only the act, but the 'humility' which hides the act. It must hide itself from going to be proclaimed.

Fourthly—the great 'humiliation' of Christ was *sin*. He was perfectly and unutterably sinless. He was the immaculate Lamb of God. He could not sin. But He bore sin. He represented sin. He was treated as sin. He was the substitute for sin. 'He was made sin for us.'

The most 'humbling' thing in all the world is sin, when it is felt to be sin. Do not the sins of believers—when they are once forgiven, overruled and transfigured—become the teachers of 'humility'? Are they not the essentials of our 'humiliation'? Other things can 'humble'; but could anything but sin ever make us 'humble' enough?

Pray that your sins may all turn into abasements. The blackness of sin—when it is shone upon by God's forgiving smile—makes the sweet tint of true 'humility.'

So tears turn to holiness, and graces are made out of our sins.

But once more. Think of this: the 'humility' of Jesus was always clothing itself in acts of kindness. It is not humility without that.

Learn this at the cradle. Would you humble yourself like Christ? Love like Christ; and think of some work of love you could do this Christmas.

And then go and do it at once, for His sake. And if the gift is so large that it actually impoverishes you,—or if the act be so demeaning that it puts you a good deal lower in some people's eyes,—or if the whole thing be very unlike what everybody else does, and exceedingly unlike whatever you did before, all the better. It is more like Him. Try to reach a point of love and self-forgetfulness as low as Bethlehem!

J. VAUGHAN,
Brighton Pulpit, No. 925.

CHRISTMAS DAY

The Father and the Son.

I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son. HEBREWS i. 5

IT is an instance of words taken out of a lower level, and raised up to a point higher than their first intention. Originally, they were part of a message sent from God by Nathan to David, to comfort him concerning his son Solomon. But Christ was David's Son, as much as Solomon. And therefore S. Paul does not hesitate to adopt these words as one of the evidences of the transcendent dignity and perfect Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ. And seeing they are words which could not be said in their integrity to any angel or archangel, therefore—‘I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son.’

We know that Christ was indeed ‘begotten of His Father before all worlds.’ But to-day that ‘begetting,’—which was before in the mind of God,—became a material fact, visible to human eyes. And therefore it is that our Church has selected these words to be among our Christmas thoughts: ‘I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son.’

The order in which the relationships are placed, or rather in which the one relationship is unfolded, and expanded, and distributed, is true and teaching. For practically, the father is the father to the child, before the child is the child of the father.

Christ Himself said of the Father,—‘Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.’ But Christ,—as Christ,—loved the Father gradually, according as His reason and powers were developed. We see it first when He was twelve years of age. But I believe that it was ever, more and more, from the first dawn of His life to its too early close!

There are many now to whom God is ‘a Father,’—quite a Father,—but they do not know Him. They do not feel His ‘children’ yet. That is a relationship which grows out of the other. One indeed with the other in fact; but not always with the other in manifestation or degree.

This is the reason why a parent loves a child more than a child loves a parent. The parent's love has the priority of time. It is the foundation of the other.

And, in like manner, for the same reason in part, spiritually, the believer loves God; but not so much as God loves him. ‘I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son.’

The question, then, appropriately suggests itself,—How was this prophecy fulfilled? *How was God ‘a Father’ to Christ?*—how was Christ ‘a Son’ to God?

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I shall only suggest one or two lines of thought.

God had it, in His eternal purpose, to give exceeding glory to His Son. Let us never forget that, in tracing the life of Christ from the cradle to the grave. It is the clew to all. There was a far design to make Christ infinitely happy; happier than He could have been had He never passed His sad life upon this earth. You will never understand God's dealings with Christ, unless you remember that.

It was an intensely unselfish thing,—and therefore purely *fatherly*,—when God was content to forego the presence of Christ for a season, and to give Him up for this end, that He and we might be happier, —for ever and ever.

In carrying out this purpose, God did most paternally, tenderly, constantly, unweariedly, watch over, and love, and honour, the Son of God.

He sent a man to herald His approach. He commissioned jubilant angels to proclaim His Advent. He surrounded His cradle with worshippers, who poured regal offerings at the Infant's feet. He protected, with marvellous care, His early life. He appointed the long training. He gave Him visible tokens of the Holy Ghost descending upon Him. He publicly proclaimed His satisfaction in Him. He comforted Him in His sorrowing hours with angelic manifestations. He spoke to Him in mystic voices. He answered all His prayers. He glorified Him with bright gleams of heavenly radiance. He sustained Him in all His passion. He witnessed to Him as His Son in everything. He raised Him from the dead again, and He exalted Him to His own right hand.

But meanwhile, all along, see how God dealt with Him.

He humbled Him in the very dust! He made Him a poor man, poorer than the poorest! He exposed Him to the jest and the scorn of the cruel! He put into His hand the bitterest cup that was ever given to man to drink! He afflicted His body; He afflicted His mind; He afflicted His spirit! He drove the iron into His soul! He let 'His own' misunderstand Him, leave Him, deny Him, betray Him! He left Him out, in His weary exile, drearily! He placed Him, in wretched contact, with the mean-hearted, and the petty, and the proud! He subjected Him to the grossest insults! He laid on Him a very mountain of care and sorrow! He forsook Him! He made Him go through a terrible darkness, more terrible than midnight! He agonised His frame; He brought Him into the very jaws of death! He treated Him as the very outcast of earth and heaven! He dealt with Him,—the holy, the pure, the immaculate One,—as if He were all sin, only sin! Therefore, 'It pleased the Lord to bruise Him.'

And this, this was the way in which God fulfilled His great undertaking to His own Son: 'I will be to Him a *Father*.'

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Stand a while! See what 'a Father' is! Behold what a Father's love is! Imprint upon your mind a Father's method with His Son. How strange! How mysterious! How awful! But all to bring about the final purpose of an all-compensating affection; all, for an eternity of love and joy; all, verifying His own word—'I know the thoughts I think towards you, saith the Lord; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.'

Never forget—in your own strange, dark hours—never forget how God was 'a Father' to Christ!'

And now the other side. *How was Christ a Son?*

For ever it was in His heart to do His Father's will. How willing! 'Lo, I come!' He set His face as a flint, and was not ashamed. Never, never did He turn back! From a little child, He 'must be about His Father's business.' He who might, at any moment, have called for 'more than twelve legions of angels,' never raised one look to avert one duty, or to escape one pain!

With that Father—while He was smiting Him—He always was in the closest communion. Into that Father's ear He poured all His sorrows; and never, for an instant, mistrusted Him.

Of every word He said, and of every mighty act He did, He gave the Father all the glory.

To Him He traced all His power for His mission, and all His grace.

He was 'obedient to Him, even unto death.' Living, He magnified Him; dying, He confided in Him; rising, He pointed to Him; ascending, He went back to Him. The centre of every thought was,—'My Father!' The fulcrum of His being was,—'My Father!'

Truly a Son! O what a Son was Christ to God! only a Son Never anything but a Son! Great, infinitely great, equal though He was, yet still always the Son! Only the Son!

Obedient, self-forgetting, fond, filial, trusting, reverencing,—'a Son!'

If you would know what 'a Father' is,—go from Bethlehem to Calvary. If you would know what 'a Son' is, go from Bethlehem to Calvary. 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son.'

But there is another thought here. If Christ be that Son to the Father, what can He not do? If the Son ask the Father anything, the Father cannot refuse His Son. And He is always asking for you.

The Son set the household free; then all is free. And Christ has set you free.

The Son reveals the Father. If you wish to see the Father, study the Son. 'He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father.'

'All things that the Father hath, are the Son's.' Do you want anything? Go unto Him. 'All that the Father hath, are the Son's.' Ask the Son.

COMPLETE SERMONS

The Son has power over His Father's house, to fill the mansions. Do you want a place? Seek it in the Son.

There is yet one more deep meaning lying in these words. The whole mystery of our salvation is wrapped up in it.

When Christ was born, this day, He was born not a Son only, but a *Representative Son*. God sees all believers in that 'Holy Child Jesus.' There is not one birth only. As Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He is born in humble hearts.

And then what God is to Christ, He is to them. Therefore, to every one of us, by virtue of our union to Christ, God says it even as He says it to Jesus, 'I will be to you a Father.'

O what an undertaking is this! When God says to a man, for time, and for eternity,—'I will be to Him a "Father."' 'A Father!' It may be chastening, afflicting, hiding Himself; but still a 'Father,'—faithful, all-engaging, loving, unchanging, for ever a 'Father'!

Always take grand views of the Fatherly character of God; views never clearly taken but at the manger. 'I will be to Him a Father.'

Henceforward, you are to Him 'a son'! not a slave—'a son'! a loving, obedient, holy, happy 'son.' To confide in Him,—to lie in His bosom,—to tell Him every secret,—to hear Him always,—to know His mind,—to be like Him,—to see Him,—to dwell with Him, —an heir, a friend, a son, for ever!

This is the lesson which God sets for thee, on Christ's natal day,—take care that you learn it well,—'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son.'

J. VAUGHAN,
Brighton Pulpit, No. 1028.

II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

God speaking in His Son.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.

HEBREWS i. 1.



HERE is a different and somewhat more accurate translation of this passage in the Revised Version. I will not quote it at length, but I will point out two of the emendations which it offers: the two which seem to me to be more important than the rest. It replaces the phrase 'sundry times' by the phrase 'divers portions'; and it changes 'by' into 'in.' God hath spoken *in* the prophets; God hath spoken *in* His Son. The difference between these two little words 'by' and 'in' is considerable. To speak *by* the prophets may mean no more

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than that the prophets were used as a passive means of communication between God and man; just, for instance, as a flute or a trumpet which lies quietly in the hand of the performer whilst his breath causes it to emit its musical sounds according to his own good will and pleasure. But when God is said to speak *in* a prophet, we are intended to understand that He enters the being of the man; pervades it with His own influence; educates it up to the acceptance of his own thoughts; and then employs the man, as a conscious and sympathising instrument, for the utterance of a message which, although it originates with God and is clothed with Divine authority, is also an expression of human thought and human feeling. But these considerations are only introductory. Now we shall pass on to the statements contained in the verses themselves.

I. In the first place, then, we find the writer of the Epistle contrasting the revelation of God's mind and will made to man before Christ came, with the revelation of God's mind and will brought in by Christ Himself. Of the former he says that it was given in 'divers portions'—that is to say, that it was fragmentary. The whole truth was not disclosed, but only one side or one aspect of it. Now, the fragmentary character of the revelation is attributable to one or two causes.

(1) First, perhaps, to the fact that it was intended for practical purposes.

(2) Another cause may be found in the unavoidable limitation of our human faculties. It is only by degrees that we can take in the truth. The earlier revelation, wonderful as it was, was yet a piece-meal affair; it was adequate to its purposes and sufficient for the needs of man. But it was imperfect; and all through its course it pointed to, it prepared the way for, it gave the pledge and guarantee of, that which should ultimately supersede it, and which should be exhaustive and final—a complete revelation to man of God and of God's will.

II. Let us pass on to consider this complete, this exhaustive, and final revelation. In these last days—these days of Messiah's Kingdom, to which you and I belong—God has spoken, and, we may add, continues to speak to us 'in His Son.' The language employed is significant: 'In His Son'; or, rather, in One whose characteristic is that He is 'Son,' our attention being fastened upon the qualification rather than upon the Person. The prophets were, in a true sense, 'sons of God.' So with the angels: they are 'sons of God.' And so are all real disciples: 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God.' But the great Being here referred to is 'Son of God' in a unique and exceptional sense. He is the only-begotten Son. No one can possibly be son as He is Son.

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This, then, being premised, we have to discuss the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ addresses Himself to the human race. Of course, as the Son of God, He speaks with authority; for He has complete knowledge of His Father's mind and will. 'Never man spake like this Man' was said of Him whilst He was upon earth; and this almost universal feeling about Him bears witness to the real character of His ministry amongst us. The human conscience, when it is allowed fair-play, has always recognised in the utterances of Jesus Christ something which marks them as coming from above. The tone is human, but it is also Divine. You listen to the discourse, and you find in it none of the tricks of oratory; there is no fine speaking; no parade of language; no flourish and flow of imagination. All is calm, and clear, and simple—so simple that the most unlettered can understand—and yet, whilst you listen, the conviction is forced upon you that the speaker beholds what He describes; that, instead of being a messenger reporting a message, He is one who has come down amongst men to tell with absolute and unerring accuracy of the things which He Himself has seen and heard. And all this, and more than this, is implied in the language of our text, which avers that God has spoken to us 'in His Son.'

Jesus Christ, then, reveals God—the unseen God—to us by His words, by His statements, by His teachings, recorded for us in the pages of the New Testament. These words are, as we have said, human utterances; but at the same time they are Divine. They come to us with absolute authority; they remove all difficulties, and settle all controversies; they are final, and there is no further communication from Heaven to be expected. When God has spoken to us in His Son, it is not likely that He will send us another prophet to succeed Him.

The life of Christ informs us that God—the unseen and awful God, from whom we shrink because of the sin that is in us—is so wonderfully kind that He takes pleasure in the harmless engagements of His creatures, and in the innocent occupations of our ordinary human life; and more than this, that He cares for those who resist and defy Him, and is willing to descend to any possible depth of self-sacrifice and self-humility, if only by so doing He may win them the blessedness of His love. In other words, the life of Jesus of Nazareth lets us know that the greatest, and most powerful, and most awful of all Beings is also the gentlest, and the tenderest, and the kindest, and the best.

The Incarnation took place for many reasons—such as, to prepare the way for the great sacrifice to be offered on the Cross; to work out a righteousness in which man could stand before God; to set before us the perfect example for a human life; to break down the selfish-

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ness of man, and to bring us together into a loving brotherhood, and to make us care for one another and help one another. But there was another purpose which the great event subserved, and it was this—that we might be able to understand the unseen God by beholding Him in the character, in the life, in the doings, in the words of His Incarnate Son.

G. CALTHROP,
The Future Life, p. 26.

The Divine Person.

God having of old spoken unto the fathers in the prophets, by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in a Son.

HEBREWS i. 1.

I. **T**HIRTY years ago, practically the whole world regarded each step in creation's plan as the result of a spoken word of God. With a view derived more from Milton than from the Bible, they thought of a voice of power.

Seven times in Milton's words he audibly spake. Seven great moments of creative power, and between—nothing! What a revolution to a view of this kind is the Darwinian theory:—that may or may not be true, but in some form or other it holds the world, nor has it shaken one jot our belief that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. We hold as the Church always held that all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. But the creative power may have been implanted in the simple protoplasm cell endued with 'the promise and potency' of all that was to be, working steadily, ceaselessly, developing surely in manifold directions, and in manifold forms handing on in multiplied vigour and complexity that first germ of life which it had received.

So in inspiration the traditional theory was as clear and as mechanical as the panorama of creation unfolded to us by Milton. God spake to Abraham, to Moses, to Samuel, to some thirty or forty people at the most, producing in them a result wholly different from that experienced by any mortal being besides. God spake, and in the interval what was happening? In that vast interval from Malachi to John Baptist was that Spirit not speaking still? But with the suggestion which I am propounding we see one long unbroken process of a Spirit ever pleading with man, ever leading him upwards and onwards, a Spirit in all ages entering into holy souls and making them sons of God and prophets. And then we are told we are banishing all that is supernatural, all that is miraculous, from the Bible. Banishing the supernatural? Nay, we are banishing not

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the supernatural but the grotesque. We banish from geology the agency of demons and fairies, but we leave wonders upon wonders still unexplained. We cannot accept the grotesque panorama in which even the genius of Milton by amplifying almost caricatures the simple grandeur of Genesis; but no one who has studied the facts of evolution can refuse to recognise how many problems the evolution of different species still presents, gaps in continuity where the religious mind still sees the working of a Divine creative power and the accomplishment of a Divine creative purpose. And if this wondrous order has been evolved from simplest forms of life the endowment of that early protoplasm with such possibilities surely implies a power as wondrous as that which could call from the opening womb of earth that marvellous procession of animals which Milton leads therefrom. So in man the implanting of that divine unrest, that divine capacity, which urges man to seek and enables him to hold the image of the heavenly, is a power as wondrous as that which is conceived as dictating to a passive recipient the form and model of a sanctuary and a commonwealth.

II. We bring to you the story of a Person and a Life. It is a story which may be told in simple words by simple teachers. Do you believe that Person was Divine and that Life from everlasting? This is indeed the question on which all else hangs. Answer first the question, 'What think ye of Christ?' and then you will see clearly what is your view of the Old Testament. We believe the Old Testament because we believe in Christ, not in Christ because we believe the Old Testament. And freely, though I admit and maintain that the Old Testament is bound up with the New, it is so in that the Old Testament gives us the early stages of that progress of which the New Testament reveals the consummation. It does not mean that belief in the Gospel history and in the Divinity of Him of whom it tells necessitates an absolute entire adhesion to the literal accuracy of every fact narrated in the Old Testament.

I am of course aware that the books of the New Testament are no less the object of critical attack than the Hebrew Scriptures. We are asked to strike out all the miracles in the story of Jesus of Nazareth because they are impossible, to refuse to believe He ever said, 'Come unto Me, all ye that travail,' because it is unsuitable. We are asked, in a word, to strike out all in the story which is divine, and then deny His divinity. But this storm of criticism has burst, and the result is still to leave room as of old for the sifting of faith. His disciples believed on Him, but some doubted.

Do not believe that in accepting some conclusions of literary research those who accept them are surrendering one stone of the citadel of the faith. No, the contrast of temper, of disposition, and of atti-

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tude is as great as ever it was between those who believe God made the world and those who believe the world made itself; between those who believe God has given a revelation of Himself to men and those who think the whole story of the Bible is a fantasy, grosser it is true in early ages and more refined in the later, but a fantasy all through.

The conflict is as sharp and the difference as accentuated, nor does agreement in the employment of certain intellectual methods make it less.

Disputes as to the method of creation matter little, by evolution or by sudden exercise of power, God's Spirit may have worked. What matters supremely is to know whether this world of ours is the product of blind forces we know not what, working we know not whitherward, or whether it is indeed a stage in a process which was started by the Word of God, and which is moulded by His will, and is tending to some far-off divine event, foreseen from of old in the counsels of His love. Whether God indeed spoke to His prophets of old face to face as a man talketh to his friend, or whether He gradually led them onward, higher and higher, step by step, to know the wisdom of God in a mystery which God ordained before the world unto our glory, this is a matter which we may leave in dispute. But still there is the point of which we speak with no hesitating voice. These beliefs, of which the Bible tells us, are no mere phantoms of imagination, bred out of man's coward fears or selfish appetites, they are the visions of the Eternal, visions of an objective reality, partial at first, distorted and incomplete, acquiring gradual fulness and perfection and completion, given in divers fragments and in divers ways, harmonised, fitted together into one perfect whole in the revelation of the Incarnate Son of God.

T. FIELD,

Cambridge Review, Nov. 27, 1890.

The Heir of all Things.

His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things. HEBREWS i. 2.

I. **C**ONSIDER first the preparing of this inheritance. God has appointed Christ heir of all things. What, then, is the preparation being made for the inheritance? The history of the earth is carrying the preparation. How slowly this history unfolds itself, as if it were some long procession! The van has gone long since out of view; the rear, far in the distance, not yet beginning to move; and we are in the midst, not able to see very much, simply because we are in the midst. And yet there are points as we advance along the way from which we can behold what is above and what is

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beneath us, understanding better what the preparation is for the inheritance, understanding it because we look to Jesus our Saviour and make His history the key to the world's history, not merely to the history of individuals here and there, not as if they were but one and another and another amongst us rejoicing in Jesus, but a multitude. And as we think of that, people following Jesus, the key to the whole situation in the world's history is connected with their combination and their prospect. The history of the world is preparing the inheritance for Jesus Christ. What that inheritance is to be we do not very well know as yet. But we are getting to know. Each succeeding generation of the children of men is coming to know it better than the generation which is before ; for we are learning the lesson that progress is the law of the universe. There is a very important and clear sense in which Christ will not care to inherit much that belongs to the world ; and we shall therefore have to interpret the 'all things' which He is to inherit. The progress of the world goes on at a great expenditure. You cannot look at it without oftentimes feeling appalled as you think of it. There is an enormous wear as we go advancing towards the glory. Some things serve only a temporary end, and when they have served that end they disappear and pass away : they are not of the things that shall belong to Christ's inheritance ; they have served their purpose in being means towards the end ; but that which endures for ever is the righteousness discovered to us in the life of Jesus, reproduced for us in the life of every believer. All things, then, as they move, prepare for His inheritance, the passing in a passing way, the enduring in a more enduring way.

II. Now take a glimpse of the inheritance itself. This we shall gain if we can look forward with the eye of faith to the consummation of all things. If we can pass away from the tumult, the conflict, the struggle, the iniquity, the disappointment, the woe, all belonging to us, and go forward to that place where Christ shall stand when He gathers His ransomed to Himself, not one wanting, and receives the inheritance from the Father, we shall have a glimpse of that which He is providing that His Son may be glorified. There is a time fixed when all things shall be changed, and when the world's progress shall be complete ; leaving behind us times and seasons. The time for ploughing the fields, and for reaping the harvest, will come to a close ; we shall see the end of conflict, and of all the weariness it brings ; we shall see a close of sin, and all that terrific sorrow which has kept trailing along the path on account of our transgression. These are the things which we are leaving behind. The progress of the world means perfect righteousness.

III. This inheritance, then, shall include all the good as it is coming towards perfection. Christ's inheritance is the consummation

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of all things. If this be so, then He is teaching us that man is destined for an eternal service. And this is the faith that moves in the soul of the human race ; this is the faith which has taken possession of it, the faith which dominates it, for the human race will not believe that its life is mere bone and muscle. Preach it as you will, the human race will not believe it, will not accept any such faith as that the life of man consists merely of the body, and that bone and muscle is with him all, and that he is only a little higher than the dog. Man will not believe it, and ought not to ; if he has a conscience he cannot. He will rather believe, as the Bible teaches, that he is ‘a little lower than the angels.’ For Jesus Christ has His inheritance in the souls of men made perfect in the fellowship of saints and angels. ‘Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.’ Guided by our God, led by His Son, purified by His Spirit, we are moving together on the way which tends towards the glory to come ; and when the ransomed throng are thus presented without spot or wrinkle this shall be the kingdom of God, this the inheritance of Jesus, and that inheritance is sure.

H. CALDERWOOD,
Christian World Pulpit, vol. xii. p. 344.

God’s Sceptre upon Earth a ‘Right Sceptre.’

Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. HEBREWS i. 8.

Or, as the words stand in the 6th verse of the 45th Psalm (Bible translation),
Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ; the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

I. IN the first place, then, we perceive the ‘rectitude of God’s sceptre,’—the justice, wisdom, and mercy of God’s government,—in His superintendence and regulation of sublunary things. The world itself bears ample testimony to the intelligence, goodness, and munificence of its Ruler.

The state of man viewed as living in conformity to his Maker’s will, although not without his due share of trial and frequent intimations of his fallen and degraded nature, is still free from those glooms which habitual sin invariably casts over his being, enjoyments, and prospects ; and proves him at once to be the subject of a kingdom whose sceptre is a right and gracious sceptre ; and of a Ruler who overlooks and despises none, but ‘giveth them richly all things to enjoy.’

II. Another proof in confirmation of this character of the Divine sovereignty under which we live, is the following : the events of this

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world are, in some inscrutable manner, made subservient to the *real*, I mean spiritual, interests of the good. I am far from asserting, that these conspiring circumstances, and their effect, are always perceptible to others, or for a time, perhaps, even to themselves. They are aware, however, I may observe, of the existence of certain failings, tempers, habits, prejudices, affections, appetites, and desires, which cannot consist with their duty or welfare, and therefore with their happiness. These they know also cannot be subdued and corrected without much and constant discipline; without unremitting vigilance and firmness on their own parts; and without assistance, through constant prayer, from that higher support, 'without which nothing is strong, nothing is holy.' They have recourse, therefore, to both these means of release: and they find the enemies of their peace gradually retiring; their long and despotic dominion daily diminishing; and the influence of better things, the power of the 'right sceptre' ever more and more prevailing. Still this result has often astonished even their own minds, when they have recollected the ostensible means employed. Privations, which have grieved them, cares, which have afflicted them, injuries, which have depressed them, disappointments, which have vexed them, neglect and ingratitude, which have mortified and stung them deeply, reverses, deaths, and destitution, which seemed for the time to have extinguished every earthly hope, have each or all, in some mysterious manner, contributed to produce just that effect on their hearts and tempers, which their own consciences and convictions tell them were necessary,—nay, indispensable, to their spiritual peace and wellbeing. Thus, in the natural and moral world, good is the ultimate object of all the Divine dispensations; and although the means employed may to our confined vision seem harsh, or improbable, or inadequate, yet the final issue will always prove, that they are the merciful appointment of Him whose 'throne is for ever and ever; the sceptre of whose kingdom is a right sceptre': who 'is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.'

III. A third standing testimony of the righteous government of the world is this: that sin is ever attended by misery. This fact has been proclaimed by the God of truth Himself: 'There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked': and it needs but the scrutiny of our own hearts, or even the evidence of our own senses, at once to acknowledge it. It is an established order of things, which all the cunning and versatility of the most experienced depravity cannot elude. That the sin carries with it a short-lived gratification, or that habitual indulgence produces insensibility to remorse, rather establishes and aggravates this condition of sin, than furnishes it with the shadow of an argument, against this natural connection between sin and misery.

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Note the practical lessons which the short preceding illustration of the text may suggest.

1. In the first place, as the subjects of a Ruler whose 'throne is for ever and ever, and whose sceptre is a right sceptre,' let us be careful to reap all the advantages of that high privilege. Let us, by the strictest compliance with His declared will, and a full obedience to His commandments, gladly and gratefully enjoy the blessings annexed to our appointed walk of life, whatever it may be, in this His dominion.

2. In the next place, if 'the sceptre of our God and Saviour be a right sceptre,' we also, in the little sphere of our agency, as originally born in the image of God, should imitate, to the utmost of our power, the same rectitude, tenderness, and mercy. Like those diminutive portions of vast machines, which receive their motion, and take a corresponding movement, from some great revolving body, so should our whole conduct, and every action, bear a reference to the character and dispensations of that Power in whom we 'live, and move, and have our being.'

3. Lastly, we should be particularly on our guard not to forfeit the privileges which we enjoy as subjects of such a government.

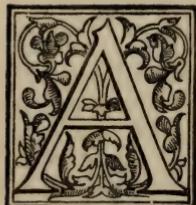
A. B. EVANS,

Sermons on the Christian Life and Character, p. 80.

III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

Christ the only Begotten of the Father.

S. JOHN i. 1, 14.



ALL the controversies of our time, whatever questions are stirring at any depth the minds and spirits of men, concentrate themselves more and more around the person of Christ.

I. In discoursing of the Word made flesh, we may fitly, as regards the redeemed, carry back our thoughts to the creation of man in God's image and likeness, which alone rendered an incarnation possible. We may fitly, also, as regards our Redeemer, declare that we regard that as but one step, the last, indeed, and most glorious one, of His manifestation, and He who so manifested Himself then, had been manifesting Himself from the beginning of the world, and not of our world only. Every spark of higher life which was not trodden out in heathenism, we have a right, resting on the Scripture, to declare that it was He who kept it alive that this light shining

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in men's darkness was *His* light, His unextinguished and unextinguishable witness in the hearts and consciences of men.

II. When, however, the light shining in the darkness proved ever more unable to scatter it, for the darkness comprehended it not, then there followed another step in the manifestation of the Eternal Word. He who was the divine ground of man's being, Himself became man. 'We beheld,' says the Apostle, 'His glory,' and what was the glory which he beheld? The fulness of His grace and truth. Not in the fulness of His power, not in the mighty works which He wrought, and which were wrought on Him, not in signs and miracles and wonders, not in any of these did the Apostle detect the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, but in this, that He went up and down the world with words of truth and gracious deeds of healing. He preached the gospel to the poor, He stooped to every need, had a heart for every woe. In these things shone out the glory which the beloved disciple saw.

III. He is thus a Man whom men may worship and yet not be guilty of idolatry; whom they are bound to worship, for He is also the Son of God, if they would not be guilty of impiety. Herein is deliverance from the last and subtlest form of all idolatry, the deification and worship of man, and worst of all, of man in all which constitutes his shame no less than his glory. 'God is man' or 'man is God.' We must choose between these two statements, and accept the tremendous consequences of our choice. A time in the development of the history of our race arrives when these are the only alternatives for every man. So it was at the first founding of the Church, when martyrs and confessors took their side, braving all and enduring all, rather than that they would give to any other man the honour, the worship, which was rightfully their Lord's. So shall it be once more, amid fiercer fires and yet sharper trials, when the Church is passing through the final agony, the great tribulation which shall precede its entrance into glory. What the God-man is, in meekness, in patience, in love, in holiness, this the history of Jesus of Nazareth abundantly declares. Nor are we left in total ignorance of what the man-god will prove. What altogether he will be, it is reserved for the final Antichrist, in his yet more complete opposition to all which is divine, in this final apotheosis of man, to declare; when he, being indeed incarnate sin, shall as God sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God, and being honoured and worshipped by all, save the little company who shall recognise in Jesus of Nazareth the Only-begotten of the Father. To this decision, to this solemn consummation, the world's moral history, the wiser of the Gentiles, are hastening, and by even faster strides.

R. C. TRENCH,

Five Sermons, p. I.

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S. John's Prologue.

S. JOHN i. 1.

WHAT a surpassing display is here made to the Church of the ‘unsearchable riches of Christ’: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men . . . That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.’

I. ‘In Him was life,’ says S. John, writing his Gospel in the fulness of the promised Spirit of all the truth. And the life that was in the Word was not given to the Word for Himself alone, but for us also. ‘With Him,’ as the Psalmist says in a most wonderful Psalm —‘With Him was the fountain of life’: a fountain of life welling up out of the depths of the Divine nature for us and for all that universe of life that was yet to be. There was life enough in the Word for all the coming creation. And then, when the Word had created all things, He immediately, and in their very creation, entered into and took up His abode within all the things He had made; and He has to this day been, and to all time will be, the true and only Fountain of all their life and strength and increase and fruitfulness. Had God the Word not from the first moment of their existence Himself entered into and thus upheld all created things before they had well begun to be, they would all have staggered, reeled, sunk out of existence, and gone back to their original nothingness. But, as by the Word all things were created, so by Him all things consist. The earth and all its inhabitants had been dissolved, had He not borne up the pillars thereof. ‘In Him was life’; life infinitely rich, infinitely various, and predestinated to be infinitely fruitful. His very imagination is to every man who cometh into the world a kind of glimpse of God’s own omniscience. For, when uncorrupted, unpolluted, and unenslaved, a man’s imagination enables him to see God and to walk with God, as Adam and Eve walked with their Creator in the cool of their undimmed and unalienated day. And in every man’s heart, in his inborn and inextinguishable love for whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: every human being has, or may have, a foretaste of the love of God for all the true and good and sweet and beautiful things He has made, as well as a share of the Divine joy in them.

II. The prologue to the Fourth Gospel was one of the great

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corner-stones of the Greek Church in the post-Apostolic age. The great Greek Fathers, in their apologetical and polemical books, constantly fell back on the prologue of S. John and on its unassailable and all-reconciling position, this position, namely, that God, the Word, has His dwelling-place and His school, and His candle lighted in every man that cometh into the world ; and that all the truth, all the goodness, all the righteousness, and all the beauty and sweet-ness that is to be found anywhere, and at any time, in the world of mankind, is all to be traced back to the all-creating and all-enlightening Word. This entirely Scriptural, this so Divine and so humane, position gave the Greek divines and the Greek missionary preachers very great advantages and very great success in dealing with those nations, both in the East and in the West, which had already been brought under the enlightening and civilising influences of the philosophy and literature and art of Greece.

III. And not only is the True Light the inward enlightenment of every man that cometh into the world ; but, as if that were not enough, the overflowings of that light fall around every man and light up the whole world into which man is placed. So truly, so essentially is the Word Light, that everything He touches straight-way shines with His light. In nature, in providence, and in grace, on earth and in heaven, the finger-marks and the footprints of the Word shine like spots and pools of light. And thus it is that when any true child of the light, in any land or in any age, opens his eyes to the world of light within him and around him and above him, he straightway sees, receives, and acknowledges the shining presence of God the Word. ‘The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.’

S. John’s great prologue does not enter upon either the nature or the amount of the light that has been kindled in Holy Scripture ; nor upon that Light of all light that was kindled when the Word was made flesh. The body of the Fourth Gospel is full of this last, and best of all our Divine enlightening ; and, please God, we shall walk with John, he leading us, and we following him, along that shining path of life and light in which the Word made flesh led him. Meantime, and always, let us both preach and meditate much more than we have ever done on the profound revelations of this great prologue. Let us more and more accustom both our minds and our hearts to its noble doctrines ; for most noble and most ennobling doctrines we have now seen and felt them to be. For what could be more ennobling, and exalting, and full of wonder and worship than just this —That the reason, and the conscience, and the imagination, and the heart that every man among us has within himself, are all

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kindled in us by the Word of God, the Divine Light Himself? and that we are all, in our first creation, and much more in our new creation in Christ Jesus, kindred with and partakers of, the very Divine nature of the very Divine Word Himself?

A. WHYTE,
Christian World Pulpit, vol. xl. p. 369.

The Reign of Love.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. S. JOHN i. 1; iii. 16.

If the character of God be such as godly men have ever believed it to be, if the God whom Holy Scripture and the reason and conscience of man reveal to us be One to whom we can honestly say upon our bended knees day by day, ‘Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven’—if language of this kind be the true utterance of manly and mature reason, and not the mere babbling of childhood to be learnt at our mother’s knees and then abjured when we put away childish things—if this be so, then we must, in our search after God, pass beyond the Reign of Law and the Reign of Will, and find the completion of the Divine character in the contemplation of a Reign of Love. *Law: Will: Love*—it is a Trinity of Kingdoms, which find their union and meet together in perfect co-operation in the Unity of God. The natural philosopher may conceivably be satisfied with the first; the metaphysician will plead for the second; the theologian will not be satisfied without the third; while the thoughtful, religious, God-fearing man, who strives to understand the world in which God has placed him, who recognises its difficulties and anomalies, and who, nevertheless, feels sure that somehow God must be supreme, and that all must be right, will welcome all the three; and he will find in the *Law* of God, the *Will* of God, and the *Love* of God, that which is sufficient to satisfy his reason and to comfort his heart.

Consider the need of a Reign of Love, and the declaration of the reality of that reign by Him who Himself has been called ‘the King of Love.’ I readily admit the need of such a declaration; I feel the darkness which without Christ hangs over the world, and the possibility without knowledge of Him of maintaining a powerful and plausible argument against the love of God. Even as it is we have not a beam more of light than we need; we can without much

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difficulty go astray ; it is a 'kindly light' which will 'lead us on,' if we watch it carefully and humbly, but which does not utterly destroy the shadows which darken the world and which sadden human history. Only think what a true light is that which is supplied by the coming of Jesus Christ !

I. First there is His teaching. Let any one read the Sermon on the Mount, or the Parables, or the various lessons given from time to time to the disciples or to others. That teaching has, as a matter of fact, leavened the world : it has not wholly converted it : but it has been the seed of such a reformation, and the opening of such a new era, as were never dreamed of before. I presume that few persons will be found to deny, that the healing of almost every wound from which human nature suffers may be found in the teaching of Jesus Christ. You may say, if you please, that the same teaching is to be found elsewhere : but it is obvious to ask, Where is it ? And even if there be good teaching elsewhere, as in Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, and in the sacred books of the East, we may not only question the excellence of such teaching as compared with that of the Gospels, but we may ask how it is that the teaching of Christ has been differenced from all other in its penetrating character, so that while other teaching is the property of scholars, that of Christ has become a Gospel to the poor, and is intelligible to the most simple, and has become the basis of modern civilisation ? It is very easy when you have used the teaching of Christ for centuries, and have got His maxims incorporated with the very life of civilised man, to say that you could have done very well without such teaching or maxims ; but the suggestion is unfair and ungenerous : no, whatever may be said concerning the more mysterious doctrines respecting Christ, let us at least acknowledge that the teaching of the Gospels is the best, in fact the only effective teaching on a large scale, which mankind have received concerning those things which most affect human happiness and peace.

II. The same kind of remark might be made concerning the whole life of our Lord upon earth. In fact, He was not a mere *teacher*, but emphatically a *life*. He showed what man could be, what man ought to be, what man was intended to be. The possibility of holy living and of communion with God became infinitely magnified after such a life as that of Jesus Christ had been led upon earth. It was a beacon to guide the whole of humanity. No one had conceived of such an absolutely loving, self-denying, self-sacrificing life before ; and now, after nearly two thousand years, it shines absolutely as bright as ever, and no one has hitherto conceived of anything fairer and more divine than the life which Jesus Christ led.

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III. But I quite admit that anything which can be said concerning either the teaching or the life of Jesus Christ, regarded from their human side, must fall short of an adequate exhibition of Him as declaring the existence of a 'Reign of Love.' To realise the manner in which Christ does this we must contemplate Him as the Church teaches us to contemplate Him in Advent. An *Advent*, not a mere human *birth*; One coming in great humility, because the love of God and His own submission to God's will sent Him; One who was 'begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God,' and who 'made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man'! Oh, my Christian brethren, you must rise to the whole gigantic height of the Catholic faith, if you would appreciate the coming of Christ as the demonstration of the love of God; nothing short of this will produce the result; you may sit at the feet of Jesus, as they did in Galilee of old, who followed Him to the hillside and heard Him say many wonderful things which the world has never forgotten and never can forget; you may watch Him as He goes about doing good, you may follow Him from the day when He was subject to His parents to that later day when He was submissive to those who falsely accused and judged Him; you may admire His teaching; you may reverence His life, but you will never begin to understand the mystery of His being, or the real significance of all that He said and did and suffered, till you think of Him in the manner suggested by my text: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . God so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

And if the one great step be taken, that is to say, if a man can really *as* a man—as one who has put away childish things, and who knows the difficulty of saying 'Yes,' but the greater difficulty of saying 'No,'—if a man in the full exercise of his reason and judgment can say, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord,' then many other conclusions will follow. Such a man will be able to accept the mystery of a sacrifice for sins, of the forgiveness of sins through the Cross and Passion of Christ, of the infinite love of God, of the surpassing truth which may be described as the climax of Apostolic teaching, that 'God is Love.' Frederick Maurice has said that this is the most difficult of truths to accept in all its fulness. Perhaps it may be so. I have always thought that Michael Angelo's masterpiece in the Sistine Chapel, his fresco of the Last Judgment, errs by its strong representation of the Lord Jesus Christ as a mighty

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conqueror of His enemies, rather than as the 'King of Love.' It seems too terrible a rendering of the terrible hymn,

Dies irae, dies illa,
Solvit saeculum in favilla,

a day of wrath indeed, but not of wrath only, a day of love too ; the heart of man knows, the promises of Scripture affirm, Thou, O God knowest, that love is stronger than wrath ; and although sin must be destroyed and all that is unclean or that maketh a lie cast out from the Divine presence, still the consummation of the war of Christ, the mighty conqueror of Satan and of sin, will be the establishment in all its completeness of the 'Reign of Love': and therefore, if I must have a human conception of the Last Judgment, I would rather think of the Saviour as sitting in the midst of the multitude as He once did in Galilee, and saying, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they do see God.' Anyhow, I am sure of this, that it will be in the restitution of all things, when Christ takes up His kingdom and reigns supreme, that we shall understand—then, and **not till then**—without perplexing doubts, without an if or a but, with the whole power of our purified intellects, that 'God is love,' and that 'to know Him is life eternal.'

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN,

Cambridge Review, Nov. 24, 1886.

The Incarnation of the Word.

S. JOHN i. 1-14.

I. **I**N this brief introduction to his Gospel, John summarised its contents and gave an abstract of the history he was about to relate in detail. That the Eternal Word, in whom was the life of all things, became flesh and was manifested among men ; that some ignored, while others recognised Him—this was what John desired to exhibit in his Gospel, and this was what he summarily stated in that compact and pregnant introductory passage. He briefly described a Being, whom he named 'the Word'; he explained the connection of this Being with God and with created things; he told how He came to the world and dwelt among men, and remarked upon the reception He met with. The Gospel unfolded what was summed up in these propositions, and narrated in detail the history of the manifestation of the Incarnate Word to men and of their reception or rejection of His Person. John introduced us to a being whom he spoke of as 'the Word.' He used the term without apology, as if it were already familiar to his readers, and yet he added a brief explanation of it, as if possibly they might attach to it ideas incompatible with his own. He used it without apology, because the

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Jewish teachers had already given it circulation. They were accustomed, when they paraphrased the Old Testament in order to render it more intelligible to the people, to substitute the expression 'Word of Jehovah' for the name of God, whenever the Scriptures represented God as appearing and acting in the world. Long before John wrote, the title 'Word' was used to designate the Divine Being through whom the unseen God acted upon the world and manifested Himself to men. The Word of God was to a Jewish mind God revealing Himself. One theory which was frequently advanced by philosophers was not altogether incompatible with the ideas suggested by John in his prologue. This theory was accustomed, though with no great definiteness, to bridge the abyss between the eternal, invisible God and His material works, by interposing some middle being or beings who might mediate between the unknown and the known. This link between God and the creature, which seemed to make God and His relation to material things more intelligible, was sometimes spoken of as the Word or Wisdom of God, the Logos. This seemed an appropriate name by which to designate that through which God made Himself known, and by which He came into relations with things and persons not Himself. Very vague indeed was the conception formed even of this intermediary Being. But of this term 'the Word,' and of the ideas that centred in it, John took advantage to proclaim the eternal and divine nature of Christ. As Paul took advantage of the altar to the Unknown God, and declared to the Athenians Him whom they ignorantly worshipped, so did John fill with definite and important meaning the word which Hebrew and Greek thinkers had alike vaguely used.

II. The title itself was full of significance. The word of a man was that by which he uttered himself, by which he put himself in communication with other persons and dealt with them; his word was his character in expression. Similarly the Word of God was God's power, intelligence, and will in expression; not dominant in potential only, but in active exercise. God's Word was His will, going forth with creative energy, and communicating life from God, the Source of life and being. 'Without Him was not any thing made which was made.' He was prior to all created things, and Himself with God and God. He was God coming into relation with other things, revealing Himself, manifesting Himself, communicating Himself. The Word was not itself God; things created were not God, but the intelligence and will that brought them into being, and that pervaded and guided them, these were God. And between the works they saw, and the God who was past finding out, there was the Word, one who from eternity had been with God, the medium of the first utterance of God's mind, and the first forth-putting of His

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power as close to the inmost nature of God and as truly uttering that nature as our word was close to and uttered our thought, capable of being used by no one besides, but by ourselves only. It was apparent then why John chose this title to designate Christ's pre-existent life. No other title brought out so clearly the identification of Christ with God, and the function of Christ to reveal God. But perhaps the chief reason why John chose this title was that they might know that the same being who manifested God in creation revealed Him now in humanity. He wished to bring the incarnation into line with creation, and to show them that this greatest manifestation of God was not an abrupt departure from previous methods, but was the culminating expression of methods and principles which had from eternity and throughout governed God's activity. Jesus Christ, who revealed the Father in human personality, was the same who had always been expressing the Father's will and giving it effect in the creation and government of all things. Through Christ's life on earth all of God that could be revealed through human nature was revealed. The character of God was revealed; and it was His character more than anything else about Him we needed to know.

III. The lessons of the Incarnation were obvious. First, from it we were to take our ideal of God. In the Incarnation we saw what God had actually done. This God, whom we had often shunned, and felt to be in our way, and an obstacle whom we had suspected of tyranny, had, through compassion and sympathy with us, broken through all impossibilities, and contrived to take the sinner's place. All this He did, not for the sake of showing us how much better a thing the Divine nature is than the human, but because His nature impelled Him to do it, because He could not bear to be solitary in His blessedness, to know in Himself the joy of holiness and love, while His creatures were missing this joy and making themselves incapable of all good. Our first thought of God then must ever be that which the Incarnation suggested, that the God with whom alone, and in all things, we had to do was not one who was alienated from us or who had no sympathy with us, but that He was one who sacrificed Himself for us, who made all things but justice and right bend to serve us, who forgave our misapprehensions, our coldness, our unspeakable folly, and made common cause with us in all that concerned our welfare. The second lesson the Incarnation taught regarded our own duty. Look steadily at the Incarnation, at the love which made Christ take our place and identify Himself with us, consider the new breath of life that this one act had breathed into human life, ennobling the world and showing us how deep and lovely were the possibilities that lay in human nature, and new thoughts of our own conduct would lay hold of our mind. As Christ's love

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became incarnate, not spending itself in any one great display apart from the needs of men, but manifesting itself in all the routine and incident of a human life, so must our love derived from Him be incarnated, not spent in one display, but animating our whole life in the flesh, and finding expression for itself in all that our earthly condition brought us into contact with. Our chance of doing good in the world depended upon this. We must learn to bear one another's burdens, and the Incarnation showed us that we could do so only so far as we identified ourselves with others and lived for them.

MARCUS DODS,
British Weekly Pulpit, vol. iii. p. 40.

Christmastide.

And the light shineth in darkness: and the darkness comprehended it not.
JOHN i. 5.

I. 'THE light shineth in darkness.' Who could find a shorter and at the same time a more exhaustive expression to designate the birth of God into our human existence: 'the light shineth in darkness.' It is then darkness into which the light from above shone, and is still shining; darkness which covered the earth and enveloped the nations, when this light shone in,—a sad darkness. And that is not saying too much; those to whom the light did not appear sat and walked in the shadow of death.

We often fancy that it must have been a bright existence and a joyous light at the time of the gods of Greece. Oh that we could look into the hearts of men! We should see that there was not much to be traced of this fancied joy and pleasure,—it was night there. Could all these splendours, with which the human mind sought to adorn human existence, sweeten the taste of him whose eyes were not quite closed? Of what use was all the charm which was poured over man's present existence, if the past and the future lay in darkness; when man received no clear comforting answer to the question: Whence and whither? The heart cannot be glad when it does not know that there is a God, and of what nature He is,—whether a mere transitory appearance, or one that can hold him fast.

Children, infants, can rejoice in the present moment with simple joy, without knowing of the past and future; but as we grow older, we can do so only when the past is distinctly known, and the future lies clear before us. Certainly among the people of Israel, among whom the light first shone, it was not thus. They knew the right and true God; they knew that man was created in the image of God; but a dark veil lay over the future; and it was not given to the pious Israelite to look joyfully into the future. The mystery was

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not yet solved, how holiness and mercy could be united in God ; there always seemed a certain arbitrariness, which could not be got rid of in the Divine government of the world, and therefore to the Israelite the end of his life was a mystery and in darkness ; he had not yet true joyfulness in his life.

The light shineth in darkness—that is the first thing which the Apostle says. We immediately distinguish the birth of the Saviour, under the image of the light which shineth in darkness. The Apostle feels that His coming can be spoken of only in a figure of speech ; he speaks in a figure,—the light, the dayspring from on high with which God has visited us, he calls it when he wishes to tell us how everything had been altered. At the birth of the Saviour light for ever entered into every heart ; and with light warmth, with warmth life, the sun of spring and the rapture of life.

II. If only our peace is not broken by the further continuation of the text,—‘The darkness comprehended it not.’ Mark the word of which he makes use. The darkness did not comprehend it and embrace it ; it did not enter into it and grasp it. The light shineth in darkness, but the darkness is not able to receive it ; it appears to it a gloomy and mysterious stranger. The light did not come into the world merely to shine, but also to work. It was also to enlighten men, and in order to this appropriation, comprehension is needed. The two things are most closely connected, and stand in the innermost interchange of operation. If we cannot comprehend the light, our eyes must be opened. That is what the Apostle means when he says, ‘the darkness comprehended it not.’ It is not yet spring in the world ; it is not yet day in the world. Do we really wish to believe that we have comprehended this light,—that all the problems of this light are solved ? Do we think that its glory and clearness exercise their full work upon us ? It must become clear to us what a small and insignificant inheritance is taken possession of by Christ,—how much is still wavering and uncertain.

And this is still more the case when we speak of the *power of light*. The power of light is not among us in nearly its full splendour, even in that part of Christendom which prides itself in worshipping Christ most purely and simply. If the light were rightly comprehended, then everything would of necessity take a different form. How many there are who have scarcely comprehended anything of it ; and those also who joyfully *reach* out after this light will confess that even if they do comprehend this light, if it is shining in their darkness, it is still far from warming them.

Shall we then say that we ought to weep on this festival ? Ought that to be the spirit of our Christmas celebration, to bow in deep humility before God ? The darkness comprehended it not ; that is a

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word which may well humble us ; but we will not stop to consider it any longer than the Apostle did. We will not forget the duty of humility, and still less the humble submission of ourselves. We must confess and say, that the reason why the light is so little comprehended by the darkness lies in the greatness of the darkness,—in the resistance which this darkness opposes to the light. We will lament that, but not linger over it ; we will rather remember that another reason lies in the glory of the light that shineth in darkness. Because its glory is so great, we are blinded by its brilliancy and cannot grasp it.

Still here also the darkness must give way,—here also so long as the light shineth, the victory of the light will come. It is the light from above, the divine, heavenly light ; it cannot give way where it is once born and arisen. He who at Christmas can weep over the small diffusion of the light, loves the light ; therefore when we humble ourselves before God, and when, with all our humiliation, joy comes into our hearts, then we feel not alone for ourselves,—then assuredly we sympathise with the world and with the Church.

R. ROTHE,
Sermons for the Christian Year, p. 57.

The Light of Christ.

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
S. JOHN i. 9.

I. **T**HREE is a special feeling of joy when a child is born in a house—a sense of delight which is felt throughout all the family. We now see, in the same human form, an expression of the joy of Christendom in commemorating the birth of the Child by whom all humanity was to be delivered and restored to the light. We are expressing this sense of the universal consequence and restorative power of what entered into the great family of man on what we call Christmas Day. The distinction which separated Jesus Christ from His forerunner and prophet was that John the Baptist was a light to illuminate others by communication of that which he received from a higher source, which was not his own, but merely a reflecting light—he was merely a satellite of the true Sun. Christ is the true light from which all light proceeds ; all light spreads from Him. There are two fields in which the Son of God worked when He first took on Him the flesh of man—first, the intellectual light, and secondly, the moral light. Even as the word is the outward revealing of the hidden mind, so the Son of God is the revealer of the hidden Deity. By some mysterious way that we know not, He came to us, and it was our very nature that

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He shared with us. Whatever light is possessed by human reason has its birth from the one Source of truth—from the revealed God. Whatever the mind of man, who is now regenerate, receives of higher knowledge, of higher perception, and of higher verity comes from Him. These wondrous truths will at last be seen by men, no longer merely in part, but they shall know that the regeneration which sanctifies their minds is received from Christ our Lord.

II. The other signification of the word 'light' is that which comes more conclusively home to us from its great necessity to us in our fallen state, and from its enduring power which works towards, elevating us from our degraded condition. Dark as the understanding of man has been since the fall, degraded as has been his reason through the clouds of ignorance which covered the light at the fall of man, yet the degradation of our morals is more grievous still. It is the light which will do more than all else to remove crime, sinful thoughts, wickedness, and the darkness which envelops the remorseful soul. The power of this light, this moral light, emanates from Jesus Christ. This light it was that He communicated to His own elect, which raised them above the race of fallen humanity, and restored to them the purity which is brought before us by the image of light. He was the new light which was born unto man, which entered into restored nature, and which had overcome the strugglings and strivings of evil which had existed since the Fall. The task which is set before us this day is to appreciate His gifts, and to strive to imitate the purity and spotless life of Him who was born on Christmas Day.

T. T. CARTER,

Church of England Pulpit, vol. iv. p. 309.

The Incarnation.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. S. JOHN i. 14.

CHRISTMAS DAY, we are all agreed, is the greatest birthday in the year. It is the birthday of the greatest Man, of the greatest Teacher of men, of the greatest Benefactor of the human race that ever lived. It is this, but it is also much more. For as on this day was born One who, whilst He is truly man, is also, nay, immeasurably more than man, He who was born on this day did not begin to be when He was conceived by His human mother, since He had already existed from before all worlds, from eternity. His human nature, His human body, and His human soul were not, as is the case with us, the whole outfit of His being; they were, in truth, the least important part of it. He had, I repeat it, already lived for an eternity when He condescended to make a human body and a

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human soul in an entirely new sense His own by uniting them to His Divine and Eternal Person. And then He wore them as a garment during His life on earth, as He does now in the courts of heaven. And then the Apostle says that 'He took upon Him the form of a servant,' and that 'He took not on Him the nature of angels, and took on Him the seed of Abraham.' And so in the collect for to-day we plead that He took our nature upon Him, and was at this time born of a pure virgin. And it was in this sense that He became or was made flesh. After existing from eternity, He united to Himself for evermore a perfect and representative sample of the bodily and immaterial nature of man.

I. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' It is, perhaps, not surprising that from the early days of Christianity men have misconceived or mis-stated what was meant by this central and mysterious truth of the Christian creed—the Incarnation of the Eternal Son. In truth, the misconceptions have been, and are, many and great. Sometimes Christians have been supposed to hold that two persons were united in Christ, instead of two natures in His single person; sometimes that the Infinite Being was confined within the finite nature which He assumed; sometimes that God ceased to be really Himself when He took to Him man's nature; sometimes that the human nature which He took was absorbed into and annihilated by union with the Deity. All of these misconceptions of the true sense of the Apostle's words have been considered and rejected by the Christian Church.

II. As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ. He who could thus bring together matter and spirit, notwithstanding their utter contrariety of nature, and could constitute out of them a single human personality or being, He might surely, if it pleased Him, raise both matter and spirit—raise a human body and a human soul to union with His own Divinity under the control of His Eternal Person. That God should have created at all is, indeed, a mystery; that He should have created a moral world of which he He must have foreseen the history is a still greater mystery; but that, having done this, He, the Eternal Justice, He, the Eternal Charity, should have left His handiwork to itself, would have been, had it been true, had it been possible, a much greater and, I will add, a much darker mystery.

III. Let us think, for a moment, of the life of our Lord upon earth as putting such high, such exceptional honour upon human nature. The moral beauty of which mankind is capable appeared in the earthly life of Jesus as it never appeared before or since. Had man invented such a moral portrait, the invention would have been scarcely less a matter of wonder than the reality, but no literary

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creation could have made so deep and enduring a mark on generations of human beings as has been made by the life of Jesus ; yet we can only surrender ourselves to its power on one condition—that we must frankly admit that it is the life of the Word made flesh no less truly than the life of the Son of Mary. A mere man might have been inspired to say : ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit,’ ‘Blessed are they that mourn,’ ‘Blessed are the meek,’ ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness,’ ‘Blessed are the merciful,’ ‘Blessed are the pure in heart,’ ‘Blessed are the peacemakers,’ ‘Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,’ but no mere man, being humble and veracious, could have said of himself ‘I am the Life,’ ‘I am the Light of the World,’ ‘He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.’ Jesus says too much about Himself if He is to be measured by a standard of merely human excellence ; if He is only man we cannot say that all His language is either modest or truthful. All, indeed, falls into place if He is also the Eternal Son of God, and in embracing this central, this vital truth, we recognise the supreme significance of His life as that of God manifest in the flesh. Embrace this truth, and it is not hard to understand how His death on Calvary might avail even for much more than the world’s redemption, and how at His word weak and poor elements of water and bread and wine might become channels of spiritual blessings, contact with which would mean new power and life for the souls and bodies of men. Nor does it matter whether such a life as that of Jesus, radiant with the beauty, charged with the force of God, was lived on a large sun or on a small planet. The moral world has, after all, no relation to the material, the perfect moral being is not impressed as some of our physicists would seem to be by mere material bulk. If it is true of God that ‘He hath no pleasure in the strength of an horse, neither delighteth He in any man’s legs,’ so it is true that since the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, the vastest stars and suns have no more claim, on account of their size, to His regard. When He united Himself to a human form in and through which to achieve the elevation and the redemption of His human family, He chose the scene where the Divine work would be best achieved ; He chose the little planet on which we His moral creatures live ; He chose as His birthplace, not Rome, not even Jerusalem, but Bethlehem, though it was little among the thousands of Judah ; He did not abhor the Virgin’s womb.

And therefore, Christmas Day is the second birthday of the human family. No other day in the year reminds us more persuasively of the greatness of man, of the greatness, actual or possible, of every human being ; nothing that can be said about man’s capacities or his progress, his prerogatives or his rights, approaches even distantly

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to what is involved in God's so having loved this world that He gave His only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Him.

H. P. LIDDON,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. xxxiii. p. 8.

The Word made Flesh.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. S. JOHN i. 14.

I. **N**OTICE the way in which the fact of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word in the person of Jesus of Nazareth is set before us in the New Testament. The Incarnation of the Eternal Word in the person of Jesus of Nazareth involves the pre-existence of Christ. The persons to whom John was writing were perfectly familiar with the story of the Gospel. They knew perfectly well that John was about to speak to them of Him who was born at Bethlehem, and who died at Calvary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, whose life was as real a life, and as really apprehended by them, as the life of any man who sat upon the throne of the Cæsar, or of any governor of Judæa or of Galilee. But it is not of Bethlehem that John begins to speak. He suspends their attention before he comes up to the story of the man Christ Jesus. He carries their thoughts back to that which is in the beginning, and which was in the beginning with God. Now, it seems to me perfectly plain that by no stretch of the fancy—by no fanciful interpretation—can language like this, under circumstances like this, be applied to any merely human being. John's object is to prepare the way for what he has to declare concerning a man who lived. John's object is to fix our attention upon Him, and he says of Him: 'The Word—that Word which had been in the beginning with God, that Word which was God, that Word by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made, that Word whose life was the light of men—that Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father.'

II. But now there is another suggestion of this doctrine of the Incarnation—another lesson of it which is very important for us actually to apprehend—that is, *the humanity of Christ Jesus*. There were some in John's days who denied that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh. They thought that He had but the semblance of a body, without human passions and without human wants; that He knew nothing of the real weakness and the real temptations of men. Now, emphatically what John affirms is this, that the Eternal Word struck His being into the bounds of a mortal man; that He was born a

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child and grew up in subjection to His parents, learning as we learn, through the processes of the years growing in wisdom, just as He grew in stature and in favour with God and man. This was no mere semblance of flesh.

III. Then this doctrine of the Incarnation brings before us once more *the Divine Sonship of Jesus*. The Man Christ Jesus was the Son of God.

And now let us think of the signification, the meaning, the significance to us, of the doctrine of the Incarnation. It has a twofold significance. It is a revelation of God. Yes; but it is no less a revelation of the possibilities of man.

First, then, I say, it is *a revelation of God*. What did John mean when he said: 'No man hath seen God at any time'? He was a Jew, and it was the great glory of the Jews that they had had God revealed to them. Christ gives us the word of God incarnated, the Divine One living among us. We see how He feels. We understand how He thinks. He looks upon us from His eyes, and shines upon us with the light of His countenance, and we behold in Him the glory of the very God.

The second thought is only less important than this; and that is that in the Incarnation, in Christ, in the Eternal Word, in the Word become flesh and dwelling among us, we have *a revelation of the nature of the possibilities of man*. The Word of God could become man. He could not become a tree, a stone, a flower, a beast of the field, but it was possible for Him to become a man; and that means that it was possible for man to rise up into the fellowship and participation of the Divine nature—to become like God not simply by initiation or by obedience, but by sharing in His very being, partaking of His Spirit, and being made like unto Himself.

A. MACKENNAL,
Christian World Pulpit, vol. xxxvi. p. 373.

Christian Asceticism.

The Word was made flesh. S. JOHN i. 14.

THE asceticism preached by Christ from His Cross is radically and vitally different from all other possible forms in which asceticism meets us, and it is this teaching of the Cross which alone brings into harmonious unity the double conception of the rest as at once the consummation and humanity of the Eternal Sufferer. Let us see this radical difference by contrasting with the mind of Christ the temper to which belongs the thought-forms of human asceticism.

I. One of the most beautiful stories in which the pathos of this fleeting life has ever embodied itself is that of the first conversion

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of Sakya-muni, the Buddha. Here is an ascetic ideal which very superficial people, who are caught by the mere accidental resemblance, are apt to liken to the Christian teaching. But on what is this Eastern ideal founded? Whence does it spring? It springs out of a sense of the worthlessness of all that is human, temporal, fleshly. Here on earth is nothing but illusion; all is fleeting, vanishing, hollow; all passes into decay; all miserably dies. Even form and individual existence is delusive; its feelings, desires, passions, appetites, movements, are all vain, empty, deceitful, aimless. The spirit of wisdom cuts itself off from these. It slits all ties that fasten it down within the network of life; it forsakes all, it spurns all; it makes good its escape, it crosses to the other shore; it passes into eternal stillness untouched by desire. Here is the spring of Eastern asceticism. Let us turn to the highest Western ideal: what has it to say?

II. There is no scene in all ancient literature that for pathos and beauty and depth surpasses the immortal dialogue in which Plato portrays the last hours of his heroic and martyred master. Here, indeed, we come far nearer to the spirit and tone of Christ than in the desperate and ghastly pessimism of Buddha. 'I thought that in going to the other world we could not be without a divine call, and that we would be happy, if any man ever was, when he arrived there.' How exquisite the Hellenic serenity, the sweet reasonableness of tone, by the side of the passionate Indian nihilism. But the fair Platonic flower is rooted in bitterness—the bitterness of a disruption, of a life-long quarrel. The mind, assured of its own lofty ambitions, spurns its humble companion, the body. It frets at the confusion, the turmoils, the appetites, the desires, the motives of the lower self which cramp its aims and interrupt its studies; it kicks against the pricks of earthly life. The bodily, the human, the emotional, the imperfect—these are flung away, that the spirit may mount. Death is the secret. In death the true manhood makes good its escape.

III. Now the Christian asceticism contradicts all this freely. Its movement is steadily in the opposite direction. It starts from above. The life of the soul is not a movement of the human spirit upward, attaining its release at death, but a descent of the Divine Spirit downwards, to inhabit, and possess, and secure for its own our frail and fleshly nature. The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. The test of the revelation lies in the dignity, the work, the honour, that is brought in upon the flesh of men. It becomes the assured temple of the Word; it receives into itself the glory of God.

The incarnation of Christ is the measure of God's respect for human nature. He places His Son under its limitations, and so recognises, justifies, eternalises them. He devotes Himself to saving, illuminat-

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ing, redeeming it; and this out of His supreme love for it, which forbids Him to leave it to its sins, or to slay it for its guilt, or to desert it in its shame. God so loves it, loves the human, loves the body, loves the earth, that He sent His only Son to win it again into glory; and so loving it as His child, He takes it as it stands, in its natural earthly condition, just as history had made it, with all its povertyes, crimes, diseases, infirmities, with all its blindness, hardness, frailty. All of this He takes into Himself. He will share it all; none of it shall be despised or spurned. Here is the motive, the spirit of Christ's suffering, Christ's asceticism, Christ's cross. It exhibits, not the pride of the human spirit over against the infirm flesh, but the pity and Divine spirit for the broken and bruised flesh. It is a display, not of the worthlessness of human life, but of its high and immeasurable worth. The Agony and the Passion of Christ embody the price at which God considers it worth while to redeem the flesh of man. There is His estimate of the value of humanity.

IV. Two points we may notice as following from this. First, we see how radical is the loss of those who stop short with the conception that Jesus Christ is one among the noble martyrs for the overcoming of spiritual over fleshly truth. No doubt we may make our approach to the Cross from that side. Jesus Christ did indeed fulfil the martyr's ideal; He died on behalf of His sheep; He draws men to His uplifted cross by the fascination of an heroic sacrifice for truth. His martyrdom forms one of the doorways through which men can pass in and draw near; and God forbid that we should bar any way by which sons can gain access to grace. Only for men to stop short there, to be caught and imprisoned within the conception of Him, is to miss all that gives to the Cross its peculiar significance, to miss all that gives its special and unique colour to the Christian ascetic temper. That temper takes all its colour, and tone, and character from its belief that the Cross is not the apotheosis of an heroic human spirit, but the pledge of the compassion and love of an Incarnate Son for the human flesh which He has, at such a cost, set Himself to redeem. His message is, not through suffering and death lie the escape of the spirit from the burdens of the body, but through suffering and death lies the road by which the body can become again the purged and purified vessel of Divine glory.

And then, again, under this conception of the Christ, the problem with which we started solves itself; the royal and the suffering Christ fall together, and become one consistent whole. The suffering of the crucified Christ is the uttermost tribute which the royal Christ pays to the value He sets on the flesh which He has assumed. By assuming it He proclaimed Himself its Lord, He made evident His estimate of it, and then by clinging to it, even at the cost of all that

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it involved, even at the price of blood, He carried the proof yet further of how dearly and deeply He valued and loved it. The Cross is the final act of the same revelation which began when the Word took flesh and dwelt among us.

H. SCOTT HOLLAND,
In Behalf of Belief, p. 238.

The Incarnation of the Word

The Word was made flesh. S. JOHN i. 14.

'THE Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' The thought is presented by S. John as a climax. Matter in its successive gradations, from the conflict of atoms to the body of the saint, had been expressing with increasing clearness the character and attributes of its Creator. Reason had been yearning to reduce its material embodiment from stubborn resistance to obedient freedom, and at length in the fulness of time the two currents coalesce. Matter becomes at last an adequate expression of its Creator. God is at last revealed to His creation in material form. And the Incarnation, once accomplished, throws a 'supplementary reflux of light' upon all the ascending stages of the world's antecedent evolution.

I. For the fact of the Resurrection, as attested, preached, appealed to, by S. Paul, is too plain an event of history to be possibly ignored, and the Resurrection, once accepted, proves the Incarnation to have been a reality; independently of the undoubted truth that our more sympathetic modern criticism tends increasingly towards the conviction that no combination of, or refinement upon, the thoughts of antecedent thinkers could have invented the Incarnation if it had not actually happened. Here, as in all other cases, philosophy is the interpreter of history: it never has been, it never can be, its creator. But if we thus view the Incarnation as no interruption of previous development, but as the climax, the summary, the fulfilment of all nature's dim auguries, of all philosophic aspirations, of all that prophet and king had desired to see and had not seen; predestined, we may well believe, as did the Scotist theologians, independently of human sin—secular thought and the secular world, as it is called, assume for us a new significance. Our Lord did not cease to appeal to the teaching of the lilies, and the corn, and the sunrise, as if its need were superseded by His being the very truth. He only reveals it to be more nearly one with Him than men had before suspected, by such phrases as 'I am the Vine,' 'I am the Shepherd,' 'I am the Bread of Life.' He does not abrogate the Roman law, but only points to its emanation from above. He says expressly of the drift

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of previous Hebrew history, ‘Think not that I am come to destroy : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.’

So that, on whatever side of us we look, we see in Christianity not so much a circumference within which is truth, and outside which falsehood, as a centre of attraction towards which all that is lovely and of good report is for ever drawing nearer, till approximation becomes prophecy.

II. This view of the Incarnation as the climax to which all life and thought lead up has naturally found its most emphatic expression in intellectual ages, and at the Ephesus or Alexandria, the intellectual centres of their age. At times when thought was not, and the vital energies of the Christian Church were concentrated in a death-struggle with the moral evil of the world, her speculative mission would lie in comparative abeyance. But never, perhaps, before has it more needed reassertion than in an age which looks at all things in the light of their evolution.

Our Lord Jesus Christ stands forth as the head and summary of that material creation through whose gradual development He had all along been preparing for Himself a body—man made at last in the image of God. He stands forth as the final utterance of those eternal verities which philosophy had all along been struggling to express with stammering tongue and lisping lips—the Word made flesh. He stands as the goal in which all human progress finds its possibility, its meaning, and its end—the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is immanent, as we say, in all creation; but none the less He is its Creator, and as such not only through all, but above all, God for ever. As long as we hold this truth firmly we cannot over-estimate the reality of His partial presence in materialism, in pantheism, in secular civilisation, and in all the various imperfect forms of moral conduct and religious creed. And it is our duty as Christians never to under-estimate that presence, not only because no part of God’s revelation of Himself to men can in the long-run be ever neglected with impunity; but also because it is only by these less direct methods of approach that many souls are capable of being led to Him at all. While, on the other hand, we may never rest content till we have done all we can to lead men forward from the lesser to the larger light, from the vision through a glass darkly to the vision face to face.

III. For what our Incarnate Lord is to the universe considered as a whole, and to humanity in the mass, He is also to the individual persons of which humanity consists. And the special mission of the Christian, as distinct from all other teachers, is to bring men one by one into personal relation with their Lord. For ‘personality’ is the highest mode of existence known to our experience. The material of

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our bodies, and the thoughts of our minds, drift through us like a stream, and are gone, we know not where; but the personality, the 'I,' within us remains from the cradle to the grave, self-identical, self-conscious, independent, irresponsible, alone—the one supreme reality of which we are completely certain, and of which any solution of the universe that is to satisfy must take account. It is nothing to us to know that God dwells in matter, and moves in thought, and moulds the varying purpose of men to His own ends, unless He is in some relation to these 'personalities' of ours, with their importunate claim to be ends in themselves, not instruments used and thrown aside. But persons can only really be united to a person, as we see in our daily life. It is not in the amusements, or the business, or even in the duties, which occupy our bodies, or brains, or wills, that we really live; but in the contact which they involve, and the response that they call out from our fellows, our friends and dear ones, persons like ourselves.

Hence the solitary significance of the Incarnation. On the one side it was a revelation, fuller only in degree, of the God who had been working hitherto in the material, the intellectual, the moral world. But on the other it was a revelation, different in kind, that God was not merely an impersonal 'drift of tendency,' nor supra-personal, in such sense as to obliterate His personality, but a Person, and as such, One in community with whom all human persons were destined to find the satisfaction of their complex being. This it is which differentiates Christianity from other creeds. It is not only obedience to a law, or even following an example, but union with a Person.

J. R. ILLINGWORTH,
University and Cathedral Sermons, p. 181.

For Christmas Day.

The Word was made flesh. S. JOHN i. 14.

AVAST number of contrasts meet us to-day. Amid the darkness and chill of winter we are gathered in the gladness of a great and universal festival. As the last sands of the old year are running out, and our thoughts are filled with memories of the days 'that are no more,' we are brought in spirit, not to death but to life, and to that birth of a little Child which was the opening of a new age in our humanity. To the ear of faith the heavens resound even yet with the song of the angels, 'Peace on earth and good-will toward men.'

I. The development of every Divine purpose is immensely slow. Progress in nature, and the evolution of even physical types, require cycles that are incalculable. Life is the pledge of growth. Follow

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the line of life, and you are certain in the long-run to find advance. It is so here. Here is life—a new life in humanity. We go back to Bethlehem, to a little child in a manger, but that life involves an infinite growth, and is the pledge of the spiritual restoration of man and the redemption of the world. Not at once, not in a thousand years perhaps, not in ten thousand years for all we know, will it be accomplished; but yet, being there, a divine seed planted in our humanity, it does imply the end of which it is the seemingly feeble beginning—an end which the songs of angels anticipated with joy. That life *has* grown in our humanity. That seed *has* increased. The world is not what it once was, and the very shame with which society is looking upon the evils we deplore is the sign of how greatly the leaven of the new Kingdom has worked.

We are asked this day to ponder on the mystery of the incarnation—‘The Word was made flesh.’

II. ‘The Word.’ What do we mean by the term?

The two ideas which seem to me to be combined in the name ‘Logos,’ or ‘Word,’ are—Thought, and its expression; spirit, and its utterance. Thought is invisible; unless it is expressed it remains unknown. Christ is the Word, the direct expression of God. He is the Word that utters Him: ‘He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.’ He is not a dead word, like a printed book. He is a divine Person who, because He was in the beginning with God, and was God, is the perfect utterance of God, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.

It is in the sharpness of many contrasts that the grandeur of the incarnation consists. On the one hand is the Eternal Word, on the other is our frail flesh, and the incarnation brings them together. ‘The Word was made flesh.’

Yet it is the very sharpness of the contrasts which gives value to the truth. The nearer we bring Him to us, the more that we see it was not another kind of nature, but our own very nature, our actual flesh, with its every weakness, that He assumed, and which He redeemed, the brighter become our hopes, the more certain becomes our redemption, and the more glorious does God’s purpose appear, making us sharers of the Divine nature, because the Divine Son has clothed Himself in our nature, and raised it with Himself into heavenly places.

And so as on this day, in common with the whole Church, we go back in thought to Bethlehem, and ponder on what the shepherds saw, who came from the starlit hills to the dim stables, and to the group of peasants gathered round a poor little child, and are filled with wonder as we trace the influences which have already streamed from that manger, and think of the promise which has yet to be

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accomplished in its fulness, we may, amid the perplexities of the present, have faith in the great future. The Word has been made flesh, the seed has been planted, the life has been imparted, our humanity is redeemed ; and, therefore, although the vision tarry, we wait for it, because it will surely come. 'Glory to God in the highest. On earth peace, and good-will toward men.'

D. MACLEOD,
Christ and Society, p. 141.

Words made Flesh. (*Children's Sermon.*)

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.
S. JOHN i. 14.

I. **P**ERHAPS you do not think that there is anything in your own common experience which can help you to understand and enjoy such a saying as this. But I think there is. Come, let us see if we cannot find it.

What word shall we choose? Let us say the word 'canary.'

Now fancy you have a friend who often talks to you about a canary. He is so clearly fond of talking about it, and is so undoubtedly joyous in its possession, that you begin to feel, as he talks, that canaries must be enjoyable things; you feel you should like to have one; you catch fire with your friend's glowing enthusiasm, and when your birthday comes round, and you are asked to choose a present, you at once name a canary. You would like a canary above everything. And your father consents. He loves little live things himself, and loves more to see children learning lessons of care and thought and love. The canary is ordered.

At length the bell rings; he has come; the man is with him at the door. There is a rush to the hall; the door opens. Yes, there he is, all yellow and gold, in a lovely painted cage.

'Canary,' that *was* only a word. Now it is a word no longer. The word is made flesh, and dwells among you, and you behold its glory. Yes, you use John's very word, 'glorious'! You shout it; for all dulness has gone out of you; your soul is all alive with delight. And that is what we mean when we say 'glorious.'

I knew of a boy who had heard about the wild animal of the African deserts, the gazelle; what lovely ways it had, and how it could become the fondest of playmates; until his little heart, itself full of graceful things, was full of love for a gazelle, and great longings to have one for himself.

And the wish was gratified.

An uncle, to whom he had confided it, chanced to have an

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opportunity of buying a charming little fellow, already tamed, and with the fondling tender ways of a family pet. You can imagine how its new little master felt when he saw it, and knew that it was for him—his very own. Now fancy them together.

At first the gazelle and the boy stand and look into each other's wondering eyes. It is their hearts that are looking, and they feel at once, 'We shall be friends.' Then the boy half-timidly clasps the gazelle round the neck with his arms, and the gazelle half-timidly rubs its cheek against his, softly, and bleats. They are growing fast friends. Now he feeds it with bread from his hand, and it eats, and the boy's heart almost bursts with joy.

It skips across the lawn, and bounds round, and looks perfectly lovely.

The child's eyes gleam with delight, and he laughs merrily.

Then it follows him into the house, lies with him on the nursery hearth; and the two young, happy souls drink the sweet influences of each other's affections.

Now do you not think that that child's heart knew the difference between words and things? The name, once only a name, heard with his ears, had become a life in his house, a tumult of joy in his heart. In that family the word gazelle had been made flesh, and dwelt among them, and they beheld its glory.

II. But still better for our purpose is the case of an orphan child. Fancy the eldest girl of a little family who has heard the name 'mother,' and read it too; but she does not now know one. She hears the word on the happy lips of her school companions, and reads of it in her Bible, comforting sorrow and brightening the days of childhood. She observes that it is a tower of strength to which little folks flee and are safe. It is merciful, long-suffering, and slow to anger. It is a very present help in times of trouble. It is light and gladness. It is all sorts of little, useful, nameless heart-riches. But only to others. To her it is a name, only a name, a sorrowful name, that is all; *her* mother is dead.

Years have passed since, gathered around her knee, her little ones felt the sweet charm of the soft voice, the look, the touch we call a mother's. She remembers the night before the death, and the farewell. Long dreary years have passed since then. Nothing fills the void, nothing *can* fill it.

But now suppose that some day, a day when her father seems angry, and the weeping child loses confidence in her management of things, and the children are all cross, and everything goes wrong, that just then heaven should open, and her mother—the old familiar mother—should come back and clasp the bewildered, broken-down girl in her strong, kind arms, looking pity and wiping her tears, and

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lifting off life's load of cares ; that then she gathered all the little folks around her knee, and they all lived again in the sweet light of her dear face ; and that she had come to stop with them. What a change it would be ! Regrets and sorrows would all be turned into gratitude and delight. The dear word *mother*, which had been a word, only a word, and nothing more, would again be made flesh and dwell among them, and they would behold its glory.

And so, God and His character were once a name. His goodness, His mercy, His patience, His loving ways—these were all revealed in the Old Testament, but only in *word* ; God was a dear word. But in Jesus, words are changed into things, we *see* the sweetness of His character and *feel* its charm. The God of Paradise is in fact brought down to earth ; 'The Word is made flesh, and dwells among us, and we behold His glory.'

The glory began at Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, in the meekness and lowliness of a little babe. It ended on Calvary, where Jesus died, in the patience and mercy which have made Calvary the hope of the world. And this is the reason why it is all so glorious
'God was in Christ.'

B. WAUGH,

The Children's Sunday Hour, p. 28.

III. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

The Message of Hope.

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. ISAIAH ix. 6.

I.



HAT is our Christian answer to every riddle which life can ever present to us. It answers the riddle, first, of social progress, of human destiny. There can be no one of us who is not asking, 'Is there any end, any issue ? What hand is holding control ?' Each step forward in education, in civilisation, does but thrust those questions on us in a sharper form than before. It does but open out new weaknesses, till now unsuspected ; it forces up strange faults hitherto overlooked. Defect dogs us, and each defect becomes more serious, more alarming, as events become more complex and delicate ; each misdirection shows itself more fatal ; each act of forgetfulness or of ignorance proves yet more criminal and more bloody than before. The further we go the deeper rooted grow the evils, and more desperate the entanglements ; each rift gapes wider. The movement is, indeed, forward, progressive ; but always there comes

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with it this disclosure of some blunder that it is too late to retrieve, some failing that has already passed beyond redress; the end—if there be an end to be discovered—grows ever more and more hopelessly remote. Never, surely, did any direct and wholesome and happy end of civilisation look more unimaginable and more distant than now when we seem to have got so far on the road. What is the goal to which it all moves? Everywhere men are becoming hopeless. We seem caught in the recoil from those high hopes which the outbreak of new scientific knowledge had aroused into activity. Is science, with its claim to positive, practical, plain common-sense, going, then, to put us off, just in our hour of agony, with the vague dream of an idea which might become, perhaps, conceivable some far centuries hence under other skies than our beclouded heavens. Better than that the grimmer utterances of a harder materialism, which tells us that we are here in the face of nature, living as men who are throwing dice for their lives against a great angel who cannot lose, and does not much care to win; and that in such case it is well and wise to take good care that we know the rules of the game. That advice, if we can endure it, at least is a present rule; but then, in doing so, it abandons all idea of any given, proposed, directed end, towards which we travel. Life, it tells us, is this blind game in the dark; we must make the best of it, that is all it can say; with teeth set, with faces like flints, with hearts like iron, we are to battle our way against the interminable pressure of outward forces which make against our survival. So the ideal vanishes. Purpose, plan, meaning, significance—such is not to be found in things. Whether there be any fruit of this long travail, whether any hope is set before us, whether any golden gates will open to welcome the sick and weary race of men, whether any rest at all remaineth into which the people of God may yet pray to enter—all this needs to be wiped out of our thoughts and hearts. Such fancies are childish and impertinent. We have no time to spare for them, no time indeed to spare, for ever that dreadful game of chance proceeds which is played between us and the powers of evil. Over against us stands that awful angel, and the very next throw we make is to be for our lives. So they tell us. And is that, then, the last message of a science which opened with such fair promise? No wonder that men are daily growing more disheartened and more angry—men who looked to science to give them bread, and which only gives them this stone.

II. To us, as we begin to wonder whether the entire movement of human life is not by some evil inspiration gone after a false scent, taken some terrible misdirection, shut itself up in a blind path that arrives at no goal and has no outway—to us so heavily laden and so

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entangled, so fondly hoping ; to us, as we walk on still in darkness and seem entering the very Shadow of Death ; to us this Child is born, to us a Son is given, a Child who shall be the issue, the justification, the consummation of all the long and weary story, a Son who is Himself the goal of our pilgrimage, the fulfilment of our imperfections, the crown of our endurance, the honour of our service, the glory of our building. There, in this Son of God, is an offer made by God by which He will justify all suffering, retrieve all failure, redeem all fault ; He gives us, in Him, an end for which to live. Here is His mind, here is His plan for us—for us, not only in our simple individual troubles and worries, but for us in the mass, as a race, as a society, as a civilisation. God has a scheme, an issue prepared for which He worketh hitherto, and that issue is His Son. In Him all will be gathered in, and fulfilled, and 'the government shall be upon His shoulder,' 'of His kingdom there shall be no end,' 'His name shall be called Wonderful, the Mighty Counsellor, the Prince of Peace.' And in the power of this message we are told not to faint or fail. Nothing is lost, nothing is wasted, all is in hand towards that divine event, everything is moving ; that hand that shaped Leviathan for a plaything and takes up the mountain as a very little thing—that hand still guides, and directs, and controls, and its pressure is never removed. A rest remaineth, something is being brought about, something is coming to pass all the time, something worthy, wonderful, and lovely, a city is being built which God shall inhabit, a temple is being raised which shall be the home of God among men—to bring this to pass, to justify every effort, to become thus our perfect consummation. 'Unto us a Child is born, and unto us a Son is given.'

H. SCOTT HOLLAND,

Family Churchman, Jan. 8, 1887.

Christian Peace is Conditional.

Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end. ISAIAH ix. 7.

I. **T**HREE are two ways of looking at the life of a really great man. On the one hand, we may extol the man himself, his originality and audacity in conceiving the grand work which he accomplished, his courage in carrying it out, his enthusiasm for it, which enabled him to triumph over all difficulties and discouragements, and to win allies and helpers even from among his enemies. On the other hand, we may transfer nearly everything from the man to his generation. We may say of him that he was merely the representative of his age, the highest and most concentrated expression of the wants and aspirations of those around him. He did but gather

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up in his own person the mighty forces which were working through the whole fabric of society at that time, and precipitate them in a definite direction. If he had not been there to do the work, some one else would have arisen and carried it through.

II. Both these views have been insisted on in reference to the life of our blessed Lord ; its originality and audacity (if one may reverently say so) on the one hand ; its coincidence with the circumstances of the age on the other. But history is very far indeed from confirming the view, that when Christ came into the world He found His work already more than half accomplished. Rather we might say of the great influences which were then at work, whether social or political, philosophical or religious, ' All these things are against Me.'

Nevertheless, His government and peace have steadily prevailed. They are beating back or are absorbing these hostile influences. They have never ceased, and will never cease until He is all in all. No ; what history tells us is, that His government and peace were something very different from the spirit of the age in which He worked and lived. No mere gathering up of the moral and spiritual forces of that age, even the very best of them, would have brought about the moral revolution which we call Christianity. His government is not as the world's government ; and it is not as the world giveth that He giveth His peace.

A. PLUMMER,
Church of England Pulpit, vol. xiii. p. 29.

The Divineness of Childhood

Unto us a Child is born. **ISAIAH ix. 6.**

IT is not Christ simply as the mature man who is God manifest in the flesh for us. It is Christ the Babe of Bethlehem ; it is the child Jesus of Nazareth ; it is the youthful Christ growing in wisdom as well as in stature, and in favour with God and man ; it is Christ going about doing good among His earthly brethren, Christ in His life of suffering, Christ in His death of agony and shame, Christ triumphing and ascending. This is the Jesus, looking to whom we shall see the Author and Finisher of our faith.

I. This Jesus we have to contemplate to-day as the Babe of Bethlehem. The sacredness of the life of a child is a thought which has unfolded itself to richer perfection within the cradle of the Christian Church here as elsewhere. Childlike gentleness, childlike love, childlike trust in God, childlike trust in one another, the human heart has acquired in ever increasing fulness since the days when the Divine Child first revealed to it the thought that the childlike is the Godlike.

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II. We must aim at possessing the blessings of a childlike disposition of soul, of a disposition childlike, and therefore divine, because the childlike exists in its fullest and sweetest perfection in Christ Himself, who is our exemplar of all that is divine. He Himself tells us that we can only enter into the kingdom of heaven by approaching it with lowliness and tenderness as a little child, that the blessings of the kingdom can only be received by us as little children. He Himself was childlike all through His earthly life. He had a childlike trust in His Father's constant care. He had even the quick sympathy of a child. He ever manifested a childlike faith in things beyond the seen. He took into account all the sweet grace and tenderness, the loving trustfulness, the longings after a heavenliness in life, that are possible to the human soul. He took into account all those things that we are inclined to think it a sign of manly knowledge of the world to ignore as visionary and dreamlike.

If we would give ourselves up to imitation of the life of Christ, we must accept the lesson that Christmas brings with it, and resolve to imitate His childlike gentleness and childlike faith in the possibility of men and women of the world working out, in their daily lives, the divine promptings which are whispered within the soul by the men ever coming from the unseen world. This is the Christmas message of peace and good-will that the Christ-child is ever bringing to us. The old legend is very true. At Christmas-time, so the old story goes that our fathers and mothers in days gone by used to tell one another with hushed breath, that Christ-child ever wanders over the whole earth, and whosoever will may be as the gentle One. As the Eternal Childhood of the Divine nature became incarnate in the Child of Bethlehem, whose birth we to-day celebrate, so is it ever striving to manifest itself to us, that we may grow in childlike innocence and childlike faith. The little children of the world are an ever present manifestation to us of the gentleness which dwells in the Divine nature, and which would not be in them if it were not in the Divine One, in whom they live and move and have their being.

H. W. GRIMLEY,
Tremadoc Sermons, p. 236.

The Divine Child.

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. ISAIAH ix. 6.

THE child of the blessed Virgin Mary, the Son of the Almighty and Everlasting God, is He of whom the prophet sings. A child, yet bearing on His brow the stamp of Majesty and the impress of Omniscent thought: an infant, on whose shoulders rest the government of all worlds: a Son, one with the Father of all light

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and life: just born in Bethlehem, but yet the Ancient of Days; come to bring a sword upon the earth; to divide families; to lead multitudes to sorrow, to poverty, to persecution and to death; and yet the Prince of Peace: set for the fall, but also for the rising again, of many in Israel. But all these contrasts, and all that the most fertile imagination could conceive or the strongest words embody, come to nothing, if we once can bring ourselves to realise the one fact, declared in one of the names of the Child born to-day, Immanuel, God with us, that 'God was made man.' In this short sentence of short words lies the greatest of mysteries.

I. God was made man. A Child was born, a Son was given. The desire of all nations was fulfilled. For truly there is in all nations and in all religions a testimony to this, that man *requires* the doctrine of the Incarnation. There is and has been over all the world, in nearly every form of religion, and even with more strange vitality in courses of life where religion, as we term it, is unknown, a longing for a union between man's nature and the object of its worship; *both* to be absorbed into that higher nature (if there be any), and to have that nature brought down to earth and manifest in the flesh.

Now, it is to satisfy that true craving after a real boon, however warped or blinded it may be through human weakness—the craving after an Incarnate deity—and at the same time to condemn most severely and resist uncompromisingly the incarnation of selfishness, that the doctrine of Christmas Day directs itself.

II. 'Unto us a Son is given.' That Son is God. God through the ages had been speaking to His people by His servants the prophets. But there had been always something between. Though righteousness and judgment were and always shall be the habitation of His seat, still clouds and darkness were round about Him. Out of the darkness He spoke from Sinai's top, and even on the mercy-seat His presence was in a cloud. His justice and His mercy met together, but it was under typical sacrifices and ceremonies: and though He left not Himself without witness, still man knew not yet the power of faith, and failed to pierce the veil: but at last He resolved to speak face to face with His creature. From the habitation of His dwelling He considered all them that dwell on earth, and He determined in the Person of His Eternal Son to visit the earth and bless it.

It is needful on Christmas Day to dwell on the Godhead of Christ. Without careful thought of that, we cannot at all estimate what Christmas says to us. But passing on from that, and drawing our dazzled gaze back from the glory which pierces through, then let us think of the lessons taught by that Child who is born. Another birth in a poor cottage; will that shake the world? An

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infant round whose cradle shines no rank ; a youth on whose growing mind no appliances of costly education spend themselves ; a young man with no store of money, no shelter of patronage ; whose days are ended at an early age by an ignominious death.

‘*Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given,*’ wakes up a thought of thankfulness for a new birth in ourselves, a new creature found in us, Christ in us the hope of glory ; and each day of new desires and holier aims, and deeper insight into the things of God—each day, when we are content to choose the poor, and the little thought of, and the lightly esteemed, so it be pure, and lowly, and innocent, becomes a day of spiritual birth in our hearts.

G. C. HARRIS,
Sermons, p. 20.

A Saviour Given.

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. ISAIAH ix. 6.

I. **L**ET us consider, first, who is the Son given, and what is His purpose. It is our Lord Jesus Christ. The verse in which my text lies begins with His humanity, and mounting upward it rises to the heights of His divinity, so that here to borrow a figure of the first promise, and regard our Lord’s humanity, namely, his lower part, as His heel, I may say, the picture we have of Him is given in this verse. There He stands with His feet on earth but His head in heaven. It is a grand picture, an impressive spectacle, and yet how apparently irreconcilable the terms in which He is spoken of are, and to any one who denies His divinity, how utterly unintelligible and obscure, as the handwriting on Belshazzar’s wall. The man who casts away His divinity casts away the only key to open the mystery, and no Daniel will then come to read the words. A man, yet God—an infant, yet the Almighty—born, yet everlasting—His mother’s maker, yet his mother’s son—one whom the roof of a stable covers and a manger holds—yet one whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain ! He is called ‘Wonderful,’ and well is He so called. There is a veil here thrown over the awful and divine majesty. He does not in this clause lead us up to the throne of the Eternal ; there is nothing in the clause I have chosen such as there is yonder, where adoring angels stand with wings to screen their faces—there is nothing here to dazzle them—it is the Saviour in His humanity. The prophet conducts us to Bethlehem and its stable, to the desert and its hunger, to the well and its thirst, to the workshop and its daily toil, to the sea and its midnight storm, to Gethsemane and its bloody sweat, to Calvary and its ignominious death, and all

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along that thorny path that stretched from the manger to the cross. There were troubles Christ suffered in common with ourselves, and there were troubles that as a man, He bore for us which we never bore, and which we cannot bear. There are abysses in the sea so profound that man has measured, and said that they would receive and bury with their waves the snowy crests of the Andes ; but in that sea there are abysses deeper still that man never fathomed, where he never struck bottom, and which no ship can carry a line to sound ; and like these, immeasurable, and indeed inconceivable, were the troubles afflicting our Saviour's soul.

II. By whom was this Son given ? By His Father. Now, in regard to the things of this life, and too often in regard to the things of the next, men are wise behindhand. Man has his remedies, but they are always behindhand. The disease antedates the cure. He comes with remedies, but too late, too late for many.

The remedy which I bring in Christ's name is not too late. Before the occasion came, indeed, God was ready. Redemption was planned in the councils of eternity, and, glory be to God ! Satan's defeat secured before his first victory was won. The lifeboat was on the beach ready to be launched before the ship had struck or the storm began to blow. God was ready, ready for the fatal moment. The promise followed on the Fall.

III. To whom was He given ? We have seen who it was that was given, and who it was that gave Him. To whom was He given ? He was given to us—‘ *Unto us* a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. God commended His love to us, in that while we were sinners Christ died for us. Herein is love indeed—not that we loved God, but that He loved us.’ When Abraham rising from a sleepless bed made away to some hill-top from which he could command a view of the cities of the plain, he saw, but not with astonished eye, the guilty cities in one wide blazing fire sending up its smoke and spreading a funereal pall as it were over the face of day. He was not astonished at this sight, it was a dreadful one, but it was not an unexpected one. Where one sees the law broken, one expects under a good government to see the law vindicated : we expect to find a prison in every town, I fancy, and were we walking its corridors we should hardly start to meet the hangman there. Where justice is outraged, people expect justice shall be vindicated, and if a province throw off a sovereign's authority, however much alarmed its inhabitants might be, they would have no cause to be surprised if they should see yonder a host advancing to put down the revolt, and put the rebels to the sword. With such an avenging purpose the Son of God, attended by a host of angels, might have descended on our guilty world in manifestation of His power. But the angels that announced His

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advent announced His purpose too. ‘Peace on earth, and good-will to men,’ and the light they scatter from their quivering wings is a blessed omen of the event that by and by shall illuminate the darkness of man’s guilty soul, and turn this world’s long night of sorrow into the brightness of an eternal day.

T. GUTHRIE,
Penny Pulpit, New Series, No. 174.

The Divine Son.

Unto us a Son is given. ISAIAH ix. 6.

I. THE Lord Jesus Christ is the gift of the Father. (1) This statement must be guarded against misapprehension. It does not imply that the Son is posterior to the Father in His existence, or that He is inferior in His perfections, or that He is less desirous of the salvation of man. (2) This statement must be scripturally explained. It implies that the Son was appointed by the Father to be the substitute of sinners, that as the substitute of sinners He was subjected to the penalty of the Divine law, and that He is offered to all as a Saviour while appropriated only by them who believe in Him.

II. This gift has qualities which render it worthy to be everywhere admired and celebrated. (1) Its freeness, unmerited. (2) Its indispensable necessity. (3) Its unfailing efficacy.

What a claim on our gratitude, which should be personal, fervent, and practical.

G. BROOKS,
Five Hundred Outlines, p. 71.

A Saviour.

A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. S. LUKE ii. 11.

I. IT has been truly said that in this text you have the inmost message of the Gospel disengaged of all details and developments.

The volumes that have been written in all languages of technical theology have doubtless all their use, but every word and line in them is valueless to us, except in so far as we apprehend the plain, personal, practical truth that to us has been born ‘a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’ By saviour we mean one who rescues us; by saved we mean snatched from some imminent danger; but in the sense in which it is applied to Christ it means not only rescuer, but preserver; not only redeemer, but sanctifier; not only ‘He redeemeth my soul,’ but also ‘He leadeth me in the path of righteousness for His

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name's sake.' The word, then, involves the highest of all blessings in its most comprehensive form. If we understand it, if we have grasped it, if we have learned to live in the light of it, we have then attained the richest hope and object of life ; we can say, 'The Lord is on my side ; I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.'

II. Sin is the one poisonous tap-root of all misery and degradation, and therefore Christ came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself once for all, to wash it out in His precious blood, to tear up its records of condemnation against us, and to nail the torn fragments to His cross. If we had not this Saviour which is Christ the Lord, what courage would any one of us have to wrestle in our own hearts against fierce and never-ending temptations? But for faith in this Saviour, why should any man care in this world to do anything but to sit by his own fireside, and never to think of braving the malice, the hatred, and ingratitude of an unjust and evil world? But for hope in Jesus who would not fold his hands in despair before the banded union and the vested interests of all the powers which hate goodness? But Christianity is something more than a system of theology, something more than a code of ethics. It is salvation, it is glad tidings, which, sooner or later, shall be fulfilled entirely, when God is all in all, and there is peace on earth and good-will towards men. It is the birth to us in the city of David of 'a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'

F. W. FARRAR,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. xxxix. p. 1.

Christmas-Day Lessons

Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

S. LUKE ii. 10, 11.

CHRISTMAS DAY brings before us the relation of Christianity to the religion which went before ; for the birth at Bethlehem was itself a link with the past. The coming of Jesus Christ was not unheralded or unforeseen. Even in the heathen world there had been anticipations of an event of a character not unlike to this. In Plato's Dialogues, long before, there had been a bright ideal drawn of the Just Man ; in Virgil's Eclogues there had been a vision of a new and peaceful order of things ; but it was in the Jewish nation that those anticipations were most distinct. That wonderful people in all its history had looked, not backwards, but forwards. Other nations had prided themselves on their illustrious origin in times long past, delighted to think that their first fathers had sprung from a god, a demi-god, or a hero ; spoke of the golden age which had

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passed away. The Jewish nation alone had hardly anything of this feeling. Its best and wisest spirits turn steadily towards the future—the King, the Deliverer, the glory of the golden times of their people was far in advance; and as years rolled on this belief grew deeper and stronger. It was the hope of the whole nation, it became like a natural instinct within them, like an instinct of duty, of immortality, of self-preservation. Jesus of Nazareth, the Child born this day in the city of David, was at once the satisfaction and realisation of these ancient forebodings. His appearance was not merely the accomplishment of certain scattered and isolated predictions, it was the fulfilment of this wide and deep expectation of a whole people, and the people the most remarkable in the ancient world. It is thus the proof that Christianity, like the other chiefest gifts of God to man, was not a sudden, violent, abrupt, preternatural interference or revolution in the course of human affairs, but was part of the regular—we must almost say natural—and therefore in the highest sense, supernatural, order of the history of our race. It is a proof that our religion does not separate us from the older religions of the world, whether Jewish or Gentile; it unites us to them. This is the first point which the event of Christmas Day brings before us as showing the greatness of the Christian religion. But if Christianity is thus linked with the past, the recollections of this day also combine it with the future. If so much of what went before led up to it, so all that is most important in what followed leads us back to it. If we trace the laws, the morals, the literature, the art, of the modern world back to their source, we shall find that for the largest part of their peculiarities there is no event adequate to produce the immense transformation until we reach the same point as that in which the ancient prophecies ended. Years are now reckoned, not from the beginning of the world nor from the beginning of our country, but from the birth of Jesus Christ; and thus the very dates that we use in our daily intercourse bear witness to the fact that this day is indeed the second birthday of the human race, because it is the birthday of Him who was the second Adam of mankind, the firstborn of God's new creation. Those who have travelled in mountainous countries know how the highest crest of the mountain range is always known by seeing from that point, and that point only, the streams dividing on either side. Even so it is with the event of this day. The whole, or nearly the whole, history of the ancient world, and specially of the Israelite people, leads us up to it as certainly on the one side as the whole history of later times, especially of the Christian world, leads us up to it from the other side. Other events there are which explain particular portions of history; other birthdays can be pointed out; other characters have arisen which contain within them-

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selves the seed of much that was to follow. There is none which professes like this to command both views at once, and thus, even if we knew no more concerning it, we should feel that a life and character which so explains two dispensations come to us with a double authority. Either would be enough to constitute a claim to our reverence; both together make a claim almost irresistible.

And yet greater force is added to this claim when we remember that the record of the life of Jesus Christ as preserved to us in the four Gospels, would, of itself, lead us to expect both what came before and what followed after it, even though we knew nothing of either. The fact that such a character, so unique, so Divine, should have come into the world leads us to feel, on the one hand, that there surely must have been in earlier times some shadows, at least, or images, to represent dimly to former generations that great thing which they were not actually to witness; it would lead us to hope that there must have been some prophetic voice to announce to the future the coming of the Lord, or else the very stones would have cried out. It disposes us, also, to believe that a character so full of universal sympathy and attraction would have its effect on what came afterwards. Wherever any great character has arisen in the world, some great consequences have followed. Hardly any good life is lived entirely in vain; every life which is at once good and great leaves a long trace after it. Without Homer, Shakespeare, and Newton in the world of thought, we should have been all far poorer creatures than we are now. Without Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Luther in the world of action, the whole framework of Europe would have been different. It is no less certain that without Jesus Christ Christendom would not have existed; and without Christendom, Europe and America could never have been, either in thought or action, what they are now—the acknowledged heads of the world.

I. The whole thought and idea of all that is told us about Christmas Day suggests to us the consoling, the cheering thought, that however gloomy our lot, however distressed our portion, God, the Almighty God, has not forsaken us. It speaks to us in the most tender and endearing accents, not merely of the justice and power of God, but of the love of God towards the families of mankind. We think sometimes of the Almighty Universal Father, we must think of Him, as removed too far out of our reach or sight to care or think of us. It is the very thought that many of the heathens had of God before the birth of Christ. It is a thought which from time to time must press upon every one. But it is the special object of the Christian revelation, above all of that part of it which we celebrate on this day, to speak to us of the tenderness and the care of the Universal Mind for all of us. This feeling of what is called in the New Testa-

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ment the loving-kindness of God for man is a thought which now and then in the Old Testament, now and then in the ancient religions of Asia or of Egypt, dawned upon men but very rarely. One or two passages there are of the same kind which appear in the literature of Greece or Rome. Even in Christian times this loving-kindness has been very slowly recognised to be the chief attribute of God—hardly, we may say, before the beginning of the eighteenth century. Yet it lies at the very root of the Christian revelation, ‘God is love’; ‘God so loved the world’; ‘God is well pleased, and has a good-will towards the race of man.’ These are truths proclaimed on Christmas Day, which, however difficult to be believed, in the face of all the pains and miseries of this sinful world, yet certainly are primary principles of Christianity. If Jesus Christ, such as He is described to us in the New Testament, could be born of a human mother and in an earthly home; if He could grow up year by year, taking part in the joys, the sorrows, the sicknesses, the labours of men; if the sphere which He filled was humble and painful, and remote from the power of the world; what is this but telling us on every Christmas Day that the love of God for many, however wide the general laws of Providence, penetrates the humblest and darkest corner of the human family. And our corresponding duty—a duty hard at times, yet still not only a duty, but a privilege—is that we should recognise this love with a corresponding joyousness and cheerfulness of disposition, that the halo, as it has been sometimes said, if there be a halo which surrounds any of us from our good works, should in the eyes of those around us appear to be not pale, but radiant.

II. And, secondly, there is the truth which the heathen, and, we must also add, which Christians have often been very slow to acknowledge, that the Divine is only another word for the perfectly good, that God is goodness, and that goodness is God. The Homeric divinities were not better than human heroes; many of them were represented as very much worse. Some of the ancient temples of Greece and Rome were, indeed, dedicated to the great moral virtues—to modesty, to justice, to pity; but these were, as it were, only subordinate parts of their general religion: it was still needed to assert that the chief, supreme object of Christian worship was the full personification of graciousness, perseverance, courage, purity, as it appears in Jesus Christ. This is the true practical meaning which lies at the bottom of the doctrine which we call the divinity of Christ. That practical meaning is this, that what Christ is in His moral perfections, that God is, that we also, in our humble measure, ought to strive to attain. When we wish to know what God would have us to do, let us ask ourselves not merely what God wishes for us, but what Christ wishes. The will of Christ, we are again and again told,

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is the will of Him that sent Him. By remembering His precepts, by placing ourselves in His presence, by conforming ourselves to His likeness, we are doing the work and living in the faith of Him whose face no man hath seen, nor can see.

III. And, thirdly, let me take one special mark of the life of Christ which extends through the whole of it, which is as it were the marrow and essence, the very body and blood of His character, by which His whole career, from the cradle to the grave, is distinguished from that of any of the other founders of religions. Let me sum up it in one expression which admits of many forms: He was the Mediator, as He is called, between the Divine and human, because He was the Mediator, the middle point, the Reconciler, between the conflicting parts of human nature. Let me illustrate this for a moment by a contrast. The great Indian saint and sage, Buddha, who is revered as their redeemer by the larger part of the human race, and who not only by reason of his vast following, but by his own astonishing character, occupies a place in history second only to that of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, Buddha, or Sakya-muni, as he was called, exalted to the utmost point the idea of self-sacrifice. He withdrew from social life altogether; he was ascetic, monastic, contemplative even to the very verge of self-annihilation. All honour be to so great, so disinterested, so holy a mission. But, nevertheless, let us turn to Him who was born as on this day. He also was the great self-sacrificer. The Cross and Good Friday are the perpetual witness of the agony and shame which for the good of man He underwent. But in His whole manifestation, and especially in the associations of Christmas Day, He was, besides, the Example and the Teacher of that which the great Asiatic teacher rejected. It was the exercise of the social charities, the domestic love, the intercourse with the sons and daughters of men, which, to the eyes of His contemporaries, was the one special thing which distinguished Jesus Christ our Lord from the austere Jewish Baptist as also from the Indian sage. 'The Son of Man came eating and drinking,' without long fasting, and without long prayers. Christmas Day is the day of the Holy Family, of the parents and children playing together. You know it well from pictures,—the Christian hearth and the fireside, all over the civilised world. He was thus the Mediator, the Reconciler, of family and social life with the life of spiritual religion. The better and the dearer we are as brothers and sisters, children and parents, husbands and wives, the more do we fulfil the will of Him to whom our religious allegiance is due, and what is thus true of His combination of family life and religious life is true also of all the aspects of His appearance.

A. P. STANLEY,
Christian World Pulpit, vol. xii. p. 418.
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Salvation.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. S. LUKE ii. 10, 11.

I. **C**HISTIANITY, as the angel from heaven heralded it, as Jesus Himself proclaimed it about the villages of Galilee, as the first age of Græco-Roman civilisation received it, was glad tidings—news which, like new wine, wrought a contagious intoxication of joy among the common people, because it announced to them salvation, deliverance from evil, and a present Kingdom of God on earth. Well, I do not know in what other or better phrases than these you can describe the conscious need of our time. What is it the restless, hungry heart of modern nations is crying after through those who best interpret its strange, half-inarticulate longing? What but the bringing in of a new and better social condition for the whole people, a new and diviner order for society itself, in which men shall dwell together as comrades, in helpful fellowship, serving each the need of all, so that wrong and want and wretchedness shall be banished from the land, and a golden age shall dawn of justice and peace, plenty and contentment! Again, men are dreaming such dreams as shone before the souls of Hebrew prophets like Micah and Isaiah—dreams of a reconstituted state, of a regenerated society, of a kingdom of God on earth; and Christianity, which came into the world as the professed fulfilment of such Messianic dreams, with that announcement of a Kingdom of God upon its lips, Christianity is being openly challenged to fulfil them now!

No one can fail to notice that the modern world attaches a different conception to this central word *salvation*, from that which has been traditional in the Church. What the Church has always placed in the forefront of her message has been the deliverance of the individual from sin, and from the consequences of his own sinning; it has exhorted men to seek to have their souls saved from guilt and condemnation and Divine wrath by the forgiveness of their sins; it has sought to produce saints and holy individuals by gathering them out of the world, and training them into fitness for another and better world than this. And certain types of earnest Christianity—as, for example, the evangelism that awoke in the end of the last century, and flourished in the first part of this—have carried this so far as to sacrifice everything else to personal salvation, that is to say, to the securing of heaven for the individual believer when he dies. Now, with the revival of a keener social instinct, which is a leading mark of the second half of our century, it has become the fashion to deride

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this as pure selfishness,—selfishness in the guise of religion, a narrow, cowardly concern for one's private safety, as though *salvation*, that great Biblical word, meant just safety; and by way of violent recoil from a form of piety so isolated and individualistic as this has been, the cry of the new democracy is all for the sacrifice of the individual to the community. It will have the individual find salvation, if at all, through the bettering of the community of which he forms a part, and through his own efforts to promote this commonweal. Its idea, therefore, is not saved souls, but a wholesome public life. I am bold enough to hope that there may yet be found room in the accepted Christianity of the future for both these ideals.

The salvation of the world means more than the justifying of the individual sinner; as Christ's Kingdom slowly grows and widens through the centuries—Christ's kingdom of all nations, and of all men—it is drawing into His service many a side rill of influence which goes to swell the central stream of His redemption. The problems which are raised by the social democracy are such as never would have been raised, probably, but for the unacknowledged and subtle spread in Europe of Christian ideas,—for example, the equal worth of all men before God, and the fraternity of all men as sons of a common Father. Out of ideas like these, the new yeast has come which is fermenting in Europe, and they are problems, moreover, which are not likely to find solution except through the application, confessed or unconfessed, of principles and of ideas which the world owes to Jesus of Nazareth,—for example, His golden rule, His spirit of neighbourly love, His idea of salvation for others through the sacrifice of self. The theology and the pulpit of our churches dare not hold themselves aloof from such applications of Christianity to common life, lest that should come to pass which of all calamities will be one of the worst—namely, that the genius or spirit of Christianity and the organised framework of the Christian Church should, perchance, part company for good and take their separate roads.

II. And yet while all that has to be said, and I think it is fitting and timely that it should be said, on the one side, I am quite sure on the other, that the new social theory of salvation is apt to be as one-sided as the old, and a great deal more shallow. For the defect of its quality is this—that it tends to cleanse the outside of the cup and platter while the inside is left full of all uncleanness. It is, after all, comparatively poor work to furbish up the exterior merely of human life, to wash a man, and educate his children, and rebuild his house, and guarantee him a fair wage, and find him music, and an art gallery, and a pension after sixty, if, after all, you have left unclosed that frightful cleft which has severed the man in his deepest soul from the Will that rules this universe, and which has made him a

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slave to his own unbridled animal desires, or to the hate of good, to greed and falsehood, has made him a child of the devil—that cleavage which in its effects, beginning in the cleavage of the soul from God, goes down to the base of spiritual being. When all is said and done, therefore, it remains true that the profoundest need of all our needs is reunion to God, the renewal of a healthy relationship with Him who is the Eternal Source and Author of all our being—the Father Almighty of our spirits. And the portion of Christ's work as Saviour of mankind, in which all the rest must have its taproot, and apart from which the rest is but a washing of sepulchres, is the reconciliation of human hearts to the holy and perfect will of God which He accomplished by His sacrifice for sin.

III. To empty our teaching of the miracle of the Incarnation, or of the Resurrection, and elevation of the Incarnate to a position of spiritual efficiency at the centre of humanity as the Lord of the moral universe, would be to cut the vital nerve of our Gospel, as I conceive. There can be then no good tidings that shall bring great joy to all people, or to any people, unless He who was born in the city of David was 'a Saviour, Christ the Lord'; and the Church must assert that, and prove it out of her own experience. For the Christian experience of regenerate men is a fact inexplicable apart from Jesus Christ. And Christ is a fact inexplicable apart from His Divine origin, mission, nature. Here is the secret of hope: the advent of a Divine helper pledges on our behalf Divine help. It all lies there! Not man alone, apart from God, but man informed and reanimated by God in man—God with us—can be bidden with hope of success to work out his own salvation. No gospel of the age can ring with a note of confidence or triumph that does not proclaim a Heavensent Saviour.

J. OSWALD DYKES,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. xliv. p. 161.

News of Great Joy

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. S. LUKE ii. 10, 11.

THE full meaning of the gracious words, which they heard in the miraculous manner recorded in the text, it is not probable that the shepherds understood. The nature and dignity of the Saviour who was just born; in what sense He was to be the Christ, or anointed King; whether He was literally to sit upon the throne of His father David, or whether His kingdom was to be not of this

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world ; and, lastly, *how* the good tidings were to be to all people, and not exclusively to the children of Abraham after the flesh ; all these must have been questions too difficult, at that time, to be rightly comprehended. But the use of these promises is ‘to us and to our children ;’ we have seen the progress, and, in some points, the completion of these glad tidings ; and we have therefore a key to the interpretation of these promises, which those wanted, to whom they were personally delivered.

I. Consider the meaning of the words, ‘good tidings of great joy.’ The Christian religion is emphatically the religion of good tidings, so much so, that the expression ‘Christian religion,’ and the word ‘Gospel,’ which is equivalent to good tidings, mean the same thing. We still speak of preaching the Gospel, or good tidings, under that name intending the whole scheme of redemption by Christ. Glad tidings, indeed, they were ; to announce to the fallen race of man their restoration to the country from which they had been banished, —the healing of the broken-hearted, the deliverance of the captives from sin and death, and the recovering of sight (as well spiritual as natural) to the blind.

Further, ‘the good tidings of great joy were to be to all people ;’ no longer confined to the Israelites, as God’s former tidings had been since they became a people, but to be published ‘over the isles of the Gentiles,’ and ‘to the uttermost parts of the earth,’ ‘to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as to be the glory of His people Israel.’

II. These good tidings it is our blessed privilege at this season once more to commemorate. This day is, to those who use it and consider it aright, a day for rejoicing and thanksgiving, inferior to no festival in the year. It is a day and a season of blessed influence even to those who, resting only in early associations and the customs of their forefathers, regard it merely as a season of licensed festivity, without considering its value as a religious commemoration. Something of a Christian spirit, a kindness, a warmth, and an expansion of heart, are imparted unconsciously even to those who forget or despise the extraordinary origin of the celebration ; and the effects of this spirit upon those around them may be often nearly the same as those of a truly Christian spirit. But to those who, like Mary, ‘keep all these things, and ponder them in their heart,’¹ the recurrence of this holy season is a solemnity of joy, which, whilst it joins cheerfully in the outward expressions of gladness, has its chief altar in the heart. In thanksgiving to God, in a meditation on the mysteries of our redemption, in the expanded exercise of all the social charities, in active pity for the miseries of those houseless wretches who have no joy and comfort in this world, but, like the new-born Saviour,

¹ S. Luke ii. 19.

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‘have not a place where to lay their heads ;’ and, above all, in the practical desire of spreading the good tidings to all people, to those ‘who are walking through the valley of the shadow of death,—in these dispositions and in these exercises, the brother and disciple of Christ will derive the most blessed fruits from this holy anniversary.

R. W. JELF,
Sermons Doctrinal and Practical, p. 27.

Christmas Day.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not : for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. LUKE ii. 10, 11.

WHAT are the lessons of the Birthday of Christ ?

I. The lesson of reverence. When we think of the event commemorated to-day, we are between two dangers. It may have become a mere name and word to us, conventionally accepted, conventionally repeated, but conveying no such living meaning as, say, the last great public event, or the last birth, or marriage, or death in our own circle ; or it may have come with a fulness of meaning which has overwhelmed and confounded our thoughts, and we ask, as we well may, ‘How can such things be ?—Almighty God made a little child, the Infinite and Everlasting, born in human flesh, born to die !’ It would be overwhelming, indeed, if we were creatures of simple intellect ; but we are creatures who, besides—yes, *above* intellect, are endowed with a nature which knows what it is to love, to venerate, to rejoice, to adore ; which finds, not in its intellect, but in its affections, its highest conceivable ideal. Take in this thought, that God, above all that we can possibly be or think, *is love*—love immeasurable and inexhaustible, love most serious, love most generous, love most self-sacrificing, and then we can dare to face the mystery of the Incarnation, of God made man for the undying love of man, without being crushed and confounded under the weight of its strangeness. ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.’ That is intelligible, that is worthy of God, if God is infinite, unstinted Love ; and who can wonder that He, who is so far above our thoughts and ways, should have pushed His love so far ? But, surely, such love is too great, too awful to be before us, as it is this day, without our being fully conscious of it and alive to all its significance. Time and business and the world wear out the impressions of what is really meant by such mighty words as ‘God,’ and ‘Jesus Christ,’ and ‘Redemption,’ and ‘Everlasting Life.’ We sit but too easy to them ; our thoughts about them come to be shallow and faint ; we forget them, and forget ourselves, when we

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talk about them, when we say our prayers. Oh, if we could but have the true and living idea and impression of what this day means —of what happened on this day! Who can fathom its marvels? Who can adequately bow down and adore its graciousness, its tenderness, the divine majesty of the love which for us surrendered all, for us accepted all? The day is here, to call on us to think about it. Let us learn for future use to take a true measure of the unspeakable majesty and living goodness with which we have to deal. Let us learn its lesson of *reverence*.

II. And next, the lesson of *purity*. We all know, when the Lord our Saviour came among us, amid what innocence, with what purity and holiness He came. It was, as it must have been, the mind and atmosphere of heaven, coming with all the height of their sanctities, into human flesh. Is not this a spectacle to make us stop and be thoughtful, and consider our own experience of life and society? Whatever our experience is, at least the experience of ages has taught mankind, that there is no harder lesson for most of them than the lesson of real purity.

III. The lesson of *humility*. The human mind cannot conceive any surrender of place and claims, any willing lowliness and self-forgetfulness, any acceptance of the profoundest abasement, comparable to that which is before us in the birth, and the circumstances of the birth, of Jesus Christ. The measure of it is the measure of the distance between the Creator and the creature, and the creature in the most unregarded, most uncared-for condition, helpless, unknown, of no account for the moment amid the millions of men whom He had made, and whose pride, and loftiness, and ambition filled His own world. There He was for the time, the youngest, the weakest, the poorest of them all; and He came thus, to show what God thinks of human pride, of human ambition, of human loftiness. He came thus to show what God thinks of those who cannot be happy without having the first places and the chief rooms, and are miserable when others are put before them. He came to show what God thinks of those who have high thoughts about themselves, and who claim that their own high thoughts should be reflected in what others think of them, and in the way in which others treat them.

IV. And next, it is the lesson of *not putting our trust in the arm of flesh*. Contrast the Birthday of Christ with the purpose of His coming, to reform, to conquer, to restore the world. Contrast it with the announcements of prophecy, with the promised certainties of His kingdom and reign, with the natural expectations of human experience. Of all that mighty order which was to be, of all that overwhelming task and work before Him, here were the first steps, in the lowliest paths of human life.

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V. Lastly, the lesson of *gladness and joy*. We must, I suppose, often feel—it must be so in the average course of life with some or other of us—that we are hardly in tune for the rejoicing of Christmas. The rush of gladness which it brings with it through a whole people, through all the wide realms of Christendom, deepens to many by sharp contrast the bitterness of a recent bereavement, the sorrowful watch round a hopeless sick-bed. But amid the darkness of our life, the hope of man is still on Him, as fixed and sure as ever it was. He will not disappoint man of his hope. To-day bids us look up, in spite of everything, and lift up our heads. Come what may, nothing can efface the mark which Christmas has made in the rolls of time:—‘For us men and for our salvation, *He* was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man.’ Let us, in spite of noise and turmoil, of fear or of sorrow, give *that* its due place in our hearts. Let not private trouble, nor the march of the world and the crash of its conflicting powers, drown its holy call. It speaks to us, if we will but listen; it speaks as it did on that first birthday of our Lord, of the ‘peace beyond all understanding’; of ‘the joy unspeakable and full of glory,’ with which apostles, and saints, and martyrs went through life and death to God.

R. W. CHURCH,
Sermons for the People, p. 113.

The Child—A Sign.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. LUKE ii. 12.

IN the token to the shepherds, we may trace the forecast of what was to come, and read the features of the religion of the Saviour in this sign—the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. In it we may detect the forecast of the extent, the character, the sphere, the principle of our faith.

I. For if we accept this as the sign, it was a sign which would be universally intelligible.

In every land the face of childhood was to be seen. In the rude northern regions the mother sang her babe to rest; amid the savage superstitions of the British Isles she cowered to save her infant from the grasp of the Druid priest; in the voluptuous air and fragrant gardens of the East the children of the wealthy and the powerful roamed; in the proud households of Rome, in every rank where power or where poverty reigned, childhood appealed to the love or the pity of mankind. It needed no elaborate explanation; it was

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fitted to be a universal symbol. All could understand the sign of the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

And in this it was a fitting emblem for a religion whose benefits and whose order was to be universal.

From the days when the commission to evangelise was given—nay, even earlier—the sentence was pronounced which broke down every barrier of exclusiveness. It knew no distinctions of rank or of race. The privilege of the Jew, the wisdom of the Greek, the power of the Roman, weighed as nothing to a faith whose commission was, ‘Go ye and preach the Gospel to every creature ;’ whose origin was, ‘God so loved the world ;’ and whose law of progress was, ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free.’ I see the pioneers of that glorious faith go forth from Jerusalem ; I see them teaching the barbarous people of Malta with as much readiness as the intellectual Greek, the wealthy Corinthian, or the powerful Roman. The Apostle pleads as earnestly with the few women at the river-side as in the midst of Mars’ Hill, as among the influential of his fellow-countrymen at Rome. Philemon is as much his care as Publius ; and Timothy as Sergius Paulus or Agrippa. Their commission is universal, as was the benefit of that faith which proclaimed that the grace of God appeared to every man. God was not the God of the Jew only, but also of the Gentile ; He was a Father, who was not Father of the few, but was God and Father of all. The Redeemer died not for a privileged class, but tasted death for every man. The Divine Spirit was to be poured forth upon all flesh.

And just as the Gospel thus proclaimed that its benefits, like the Divine benefits of sun and rain, were for all the world, so did the religion of Christ prove itself fitted for all.

II. But the sign here given presents another feature—it predicts the character of the religion.

When we remember the features of that religious character which Christ came to form, no more suitable emblem than this of the ‘Child’ could be found. It was, indeed, in set terms that He so defined the condition of citizenship in that kingdom which He came to establish : ‘ Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ And as this was the character Christ proclaimed, so was it the very one which the then world most needed.

For the world was growing old. The world of wisdom was exhausted. Wearily philosopher after philosopher had spun his web of speculations to find that the next comer tore them into shreds, till philosophy became more a pastime than a pursuit. The world by wisdom knew not God.

The world of religion was growing old. The old creeds were worn

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threadbare. The phrases which once on others' lips, perchance, had some noble meaning, were now but the feeble and meaningless utterances of charlatans. Even the grand code which once made the faith of the Jew great and noble in the world was decaying and waxing old, and ready to vanish way.

The world of politics was growing old. The days of vigorous and independent statesmanship were gone, and the spirit of a nobler thirst for freedom had not yet come.

The one thing which the world needed was the restoration of the child-heart. This the Saviour taught. He showed that the restless, craving, anxious, covetous spirit which possessed mankind was one which withered every good emotion and higher desire into premature old age; that a man's life consisted not in the abundance of the things which he possessed; that there was no need for this spirit of care and avarice; for that men had a Father in heaven, who had made all things beautiful and glad; that the flowers were clad in richer robes than the wealth of Solomon could purchase, and the birds fed with more certain care than all man's eager contrivings could command; and thus, that as far as this life was concerned, men might live with the happy trustfulness of children who felt that their Father knew that they had need of these things.

III. It is a sign which, as compared with others, is *commonplace*. It would have harmonised with the previous expectations of these shepherds had some stately and celestial token accompanied the infant Saviour; but the ordinary and commonplace was chosen; and these, it must be admitted, harmonise with the religion which was developed by the Nazarene. There is no straining after grandeur. He submits to be girded.

And in this, the religion of Christ opened a new vein in the religious notions of mankind. In other creeds the stress was laid on the thing done. In Christ's teaching, not the greatness of the act, but the goodness; not the performance, but the motive and spirit, were to be the true measure.

IV. But the sign suggests a further feature. The religion of Christ has yet another marked characteristic. Not only does it proclaim blessings to all, not only does it teach contentment to all by consecrating the simplest and most prosaic toil; not only does it revive the bloom of childhood upon the withered cheek of age; but it shows the way of life to be through the vale of humiliation. It has its baptism by water, proclaiming the newness of life, the child-heart given back to a man; but it has its baptism by blood and by flame. Its disciples are not baptized into Christ's life alone, but also into His death. And the token of this is written at His very birth. The little Babe at Bethlehem may proclaim other features of the faith

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He came to teach ; but none more distinctly than this the feature of humiliation and sacrifice. The life of Him who had not where to lay His head fitly begins in the cave or outhouse, where His first breath is drawn, because there was no room in the inn. The forecast of His life is here. He is despised and rejected of man.

We are tempted to find fault with Christianity. We ask what has become of her early power. The way to revive that power is to return to the manger, and read again the lessons it teaches. The Church grows weak when she turns from this sign. When she strives to grasp power, and seeks the great rather than the good, her course will be storm-impeded, erratic and tempestuous ; but when she so learns the spirit of her earliest lessons, when she stands and waits her Father's will, when she minds not high things, but condescends to men of low estate, then will the vision of her youth rush back upon her, then will the wilderness blossom as the rose, the valley of Achor be her door of hope ; she shall sing as in the days of her youth ; the earth shall answer to her cry, and the heaven be responsive to the earth, and God to the heaven, and the signs and wonders will once more be wrought by the Name of the Holy Child Jesus.

BISHOP BOYD CARPENTER,
The Burning Bush, p. 79.

Birth and Childhood of the King.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. ST. LUKE ii. 13, 14.

I. **T**HREE is no grand reason given why Mary and Joseph should go to Judæa. The angel who is said to have announced the coming birth does not appear again to tell them that they must travel, since otherwise the Son of David will not be connected with His ancestral dwelling-place. They go because every one else is going. A decree of the Cæsar obliges the man to register himself in the village, whatever it is, to which he belongs. It may be an awkward contrivance—as a modern writer says it is—to make the conception of royalty fit with the facts. Assuredly the critic, or any ingenious man in this day, could have invented a much better tale. And if forgers of that day had, as he supposes, an unlimited command of supernatural incidents, these poor peasants might have been transported by any kind of celestial machinery to the spot in which they were required to be. Nor can we doubt that a Frenchman now, or an Oriental then, would have introduced such an event with becoming pomp. If it was part of the scheme that

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the birth should be humble, he would have taken pains that we should observe that part of it. There would have been starts of surprise, exclamations at the stooping of the Highest of all to the lowest place. Here is nothing of the kind. Events, the belief of which has affected all the art and speculation of the most civilised nations in the modern world, are recorded in fewer words, with less effort, than an ordinary historian, or the writer of a newspaper, would deem suitable to the account of the most trivial transaction. Such marvellous associations have clung for centuries to these verses, that it is hard to realise how absolutely naked they are of all ornament. We are obliged to read them again and again to assure ourselves that they really do set forth what we call the great miracle of the world.

II. The songs of Zacharias and of Mary exhibited a contrast between the old world and the new, on which I suppose that St. Luke would especially like to dwell.

Had there been the least exemption from the law claimed for Jesus, the old doctor of the law would not have seen in Him the Christ for whom he had been waiting. He had been longing for one who should Himself obey the law, and enable all who honoured it to obey it. The King who should keep the law in its spirit—the King who should impart a Spirit to His subjects that they might keep it—the King who should be shown not to be only the King of Israel but the King of men—this was He whom the heart of Simeon had recognised while reading the Prophets; this was He whom he had learnt must come in great humility, if He was to be the consolation of all who were suffering and hoping.

The *Nunc Dimittis*, like the Song of Zacharias and the Song of Mary, has become a part of our worship. We hear it and join in it without much recollection of the occasion upon which it was spoken. But that occasion gives it all its force as a living commentary on the New Testament; that makes it so beautiful and calm a vesper hymn. It is this occasion which teaches us how the Lord's Christ is manifested to any human being; how only an inward illumination can make the sacred letters intelligible even to those who study them most faithfully. It tells us that all Law and Prophecy are nothing till a Person is seen through them, till the shout of a king is heard amidst the thunders of Sinai, and the low wailings of the seer. Hard it was for an old Hillel doctor not to think that the glory of Israel must involve the darkness and downfall of the Gentiles. Through this infant the truth flashed upon him that there must be a reconciliation of both; that He was the Reconciler. He would accomplish the meaning of circumcision. He would bestow that purification which the Jew and the Gentile needed equally, by which

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both might rise to be men. At the same time there is in all prophecy a bitter mixed with the sweet, a sorrow which the joy cannot quench. Simeon has known too much of himself, too much of his countrymen, not to perceive that one who should work out the Redemption he looked for would stir the heart of the nation to its depths, would bring out all its fierceness and evil as well as its good. ‘Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel ; and for a sign which shall be spoken against.’ And then turning to the mother, who is musing on these sayings, he says, ‘Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’ Wonderful words, deeper than he could fathom even when his inspiration was fullest and brightest ; deeper than we can fathom ; words which fulfilled themselves in that day and have been fulfilling themselves in every day since.

F. D. MAURICE,
The Kingdom of Heaven, p. 25.

A High Day with the Angels.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest. S. LUKE ii. 13, 14.

CHILDREN are all far to apt to think of any ‘perfectly holy’ life as lacking altogether the strong charm of natural joys. And as for angels knowing any of those bright happy moments when young flesh and blood throbs and leaps with glad, glorious feelings, that is out of the question, they know nothing half so grand. Life in heaven may be, and no doubt is, very good and proper, and all that sort of thing. And perhaps it is a little joyous, in a weakly invalidish sort of a way ; but young hearts like theirs would have to be incessantly cautious as to how they behaved if they were there. Heaven is a kind of a beautiful church, where all natural life is restrained, a place altogether too serious for them. So thousands of children have been led to think.

I. But this is all wrong. On the contrary, at joyous Christmas-time—and the more beautiful with joy the better—is the very best time to know heaven and its angels. It is in your hours of rapture you best understand what it is to be holy. When seeing beautiful sights and hearing sounds of gladness, when great joy is upon you, and all around you is filled with free, harmless delight, then it is you are in the very best of moods to understand what it is to be an angel, at all events, what it was to be an angel at Bethlehem. That *Christmas* bit of their life was no stiff, cold monotony. Songs broke out of them as they do out of you when some glad surprise, some

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great delight, has come upon you. They had never had joy like this before, and they filled the sky with its sounds.

And as for all angels' joys, they are just as real, and as fresh, and as hearty as the joys of the frankest young human heart. They praise God with just the same genuineness of feeling as that group of little children at their summer holiday down by the sea praise that generous brother there who is building before their eyes big 'forts' and making 'great big holes' and high 'mountains' out of the sand on the shore, and all for them. Their free, generous delight as they clap him and send their shouts into the air is not one bit more real and delightful than are the angels' praises of God. Both child and angel, angel and child, do it because it is life to their life; they cannot help it. And all the ways of the kingdom of heaven are true; like the ways of the children, they are full, and natural, and frank.

II. This Christmas song compares present joys with joys they had had before. Even as we do when we say, this is the very best of all. Countless years ago, they had seen the little beginnings out of which the stars were kindled to go their shining, silent way through the midnight sky.

But that was not best of all.

Later still they watched Him gently raise a world of mere heaps of stone and water into green branching orchards and sheets of cherry-blossom, and waving fields of breast-high grass, and vast forest-trees, and silvery rivers, and turbulent, sparkling seas to which He set sands and rocks as bounds.

Nor was that best of all.

Still later they had seen Him slowly and quietly shape out of lowest dust fishes and reptiles, and birds and beasts: He filled the earth with life.

But that was not the best.

Then last of all, and crowning all, they had seen man. Still they had watched even man's creation with less wonder than they felt afterwards as they saw men and things increase and fill the earth, showing more even than the beginning of things the wonderful depths of creative wisdom and power.

But even that was not best of all.

At every stage of life His ways had filled them with new delights passing all they had known before. Beauties of creative power were eclipsed by more wonderful beauties of the purposes for which things had been created, till it seemed impossible for His glory to shine brighter, or their rapture and love of Him to rise to higher heights. Through centuries they had gone their astonished way singing with ever sweeter joy, 'All Thy works *praise* Thee.'

III. And now, after all, their sense of the blessedness of their King,

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of His beautiful, bountiful ways, becomes such as they had never dreamed before.

What they see this time is a babe wrapped in a poor woman's swaddling clothes, snug down in the soft hay of a manger; and at the sight they give a cry of astonished rapture. 'This,' they say, 'is beyond all glory, the most glorious of all!' For it was the coming of the holy, mighty Spirit of God in the visible form of man, to raise man to the purity, beauty, and bliss of His own life, and to His own dwelling.

They knew what that birth meant for both God and man; and they praised God, and congratulated man, and affirmed that such glory had never been seen in their time before.

B. WAUGH,
The Children's Sunday Hour, p. 122.

A Little Artist.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not. S. LUKE ii. 10.

WHY does Jesus so often say, 'Fear not'? It is because what He whispers to the hearts of men often brings sorrow, even though it is always a sorrow that turns to joy. That is why He says, 'Fear not.' And He tells us to judge as we judge the trees of an orchard, by the fruits; and you know that cherries, sweet and juicy as they are when rosy-ripe, are always *sour first*. And so joys that He brings are sorrows first.

And angels of Jesus whisper within us the very same thing.

The gardener does not pull all the cherries off their branches because they are green and bitter; and no sensible boy or girl will refuse to do what is right because that happens to be bitter, for all God's painful things grow to pleasant: His bitter is only for a little while. They are disagreeable at first and glorious afterwards.

I. Let me show you what I mean by the case of a little child of a friend of mine.

Some of my friend's papers were destroyed, he did not know how; but it turned out that one of his children was tired of being alone in his nursery, and, wandering about with nothing to do, passed the open door of papa's study. Suddenly he bethought his little self that he would like to draw, and, going into the study to ask for some paper and finding no one there, he helped himself. Not knowing at all what mischief he was doing, he took up a sheet of almost clean paper from the desk, and sat down on the hearthrug, his little chubby hands making all kinds of figures upon it. When it was all scribbled over, it dawned on his little mind that he might have been using what

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he ought not to have used, for there was just a bit of writing on it. So as nobody had seen him, he crumpled up the paper, threw it into the red fire, and it all went up the chimney in a little puff of grey smoke. Then he left the study and pursued his little wandering way about the landing, looking in here and there, and after his tour of the rooms was completed he returned to his nursery.

In the evening papa returned to his study, and then his paper was missed. The study was searched; the housemaid was suspected; the fire-lighting paper was carefully examined; but nothing was found, and there was no light on the subject; and papa was troubled.

The little artist in the nursery, like everybody in the house, heard all about the stir, but he said nothing. By dinner-time in the evening all was over, and every danger of his being found out was past. Papa had settled it that it was one of the mysteries of life, and had nothing more to say. But though papa had no more to say, something had, and Alic had no rest; it kept talking to him. In spite of all his little plans having been so successful, and, as he perhaps said to himself (I don't know that he did), that he had not told any stories about it—in spite of all he was far from happy; indeed the angels were saying things to him that were making him miserable. When he was going to bed he went to kiss his papa as usual, and the father saw the little cloud over his darling's face, and so, father-like, he tenderly gave him an extra squeeze, a longer kiss, and a kindlier smile even than usual, and then went on reading his paper. Then the little cloud got darker. Alic's face turned pale, and his underlip quite quivered.

And something whispered again—

‘Tell.’

And he did not like to tell. And they said—

‘Fear not.’

Then the little heart obeyed the angels, and told what he had done, and had a good cry about it; and then, with a lightened heart, because a truer one, he went his peaceful way to bed.

II. Alic is after all a picture of every wrong-doer. All little tricks, and schemes, and deceits, and false ways out of blunders, and accidents, and difficulties will bring trouble. The greatest trouble is to lose a sensitive heart, and to get used to acting little lies and doing wrong. And, like Alic, everybody will one day see how silly, how stupid, how clumsy, what miserable blundering all naughtiness has been, even only a little one, a very tiny one. And everybody, like Alic, will just wish that they had done the upright and straightforward thing.

He ‘feared’ to do right when he suddenly bethought himself that he might have spoilt paper he should not have touched. But you

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don't need telling that it was not an angel of Jesus that whispered to Alic the little word 'Burn,' for he wished a hundred times that he had not done it. And from the beginning of the world, *never* did a soul wish that it had not done what an angel of Jesus taught it to do.

Then angels love children, as all who are like God at all must do; but they never help them out of their trouble by deceits, however tiny the deceit, however great the trouble.

B. WAUGH,
The Children's Sunday Hour, p. 219.

The Song of Peace.

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.'
LUKE ii. 14.

THIS was what the angels sang concerning the birth of Christ; and do we, who call ourselves Christians, believe them? Twice every Sunday we use these words in our service. They have already been said in early morning, we shall say them again ere we part. Is it all a sham? Do we mean what we say? 'His name shall be called the Prince of Peace.' So we shall read on Christmas Day. But is it an empty sentiment, or are we striving to make the words real?

I. 'Peace on earth, goodwill towards men!' And at this moment there are eight million men under arms in Europe; eight million men prepared at a moment's notice to fly at each other's throats! There were never so many before. Is this, then, the net result of eighteen centuries of Christianity? To answer 'Yes' would be as shallow and untrue as the taunt of 'peace-at-any-price' on the other side. Christianity has verily wrought miracles of beneficence in the world, has shown visibly by the course of its history that Christ is indeed with us, going forth conquering and to conquer, and that He will not rest until He have fulfilled His promise: 'Behold, I make all things new.'

Let us have a word or two from the Sermon on the Mount: 'But I say unto you, Resist not evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . . And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain.' Any man who considers these words at all will confess that they are difficult. Not more so perhaps than some of the others. But they are so difficult that it has been said that it is impossible to carry them out, and that any nation which endeavoured to do so could not exist for a week. Now my faith in Christ makes me sure that He did mean what He said. Remember how He ended that day, what He said of

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the man 'that heareth all these sayings and keepeth them,' and of the converse. He is the very truth of God, and let His words be as difficult as they may, no Christian man can grow towards perfection, and no nation either, which does not realise that God meant them to be the very law of existence.

II. When in that Sermon on the Mount He said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers,' the words must have been received with derision. The Romans had conquered the country, and were in possession ; soldiers were there to hear Him speak. They were the most warlike people in the world. Their idea of supreme happiness was the conqueror returning home from victory ; drawn in a triumphal car up to the Capitol, dragging his spoils behind him amid the cheers of the assembled thousands. And even the Jews who listened, were not their annals full of heroic deeds of the wars of Joshua and of David and Hezekiah ? Were they not even then hoping to see some warrior arise who would drive out the Roman legions from the sacred heritage and restore the glories of David's kingdom ? Yet upon them the seed fell and grew. It grew among Romans as well as Jews. The strange heavenly-sounding word fell gently on the wrathful voices, and was lost for a while in the fierce discordancy of human strife. But it was not lost for ever. In the darkness it grew strong. And now the children of a race more warlike than the Roman at his fiercest—children of those Goths who conquered Rome, and drank the joy of battle as the wine of life, the great Anglo-Saxon race, are beginning to learn and to openly confess, the teaching of the Divine Son of Man, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.' The greatest soldier of our century said, 'There is nothing so dreadful as a great victory except a great defeat.' So that seed-word, sown upon the mountain-side, fell into the world's forbidding furrows ; and covered by the rough clods of trampled battle-fields, germinated even so, and grew. And now Christian men are coming daily to accept it as a truth self-evident, an unassailable principle of action, an eternal law of the kingdom of God.

CANON BENHAM,
Christian World Pulpit, Jan. 15, 1890.

The Great Event.

Which we see in this thing which is come to pass. LUKE ii. 15.

I. **A**N illustration of the exact fulfilment of ancient prophecy. The advent of Messiah was foretold,—the nation, the tribe, the family, the mother, the birth-place. Augustus must decree: Joseph and Mary must travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

II. A mysterious coalition of the divine and the human. That

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Babe is God manifest in the Flesh. The God-Man. We cannot understand this combination. Many things are true which you cannot understand.

III. An unprecedent act of benevolence. What was renounced, what was undergone, for whom, to what motive?

IV. A grand design. To save. To sympathise.

V. A rare example of humility.

VI. A subject of praise and thanksgiving. G. BROOKS,
Five Hundred Outlines, p. 72.

V. OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

The Manifestation of Christ.

Through the tender mercy of our God ; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. LUKE i. 78, 79.



HESE are the words of Zacharias—words with which he celebrated the coming salvation at the appearance of S. John the Baptist. He speaks of that event which we are now celebrating ; he calls the birth of the Saviour ‘the day-spring from on high,’ which through the tender mercy of our God ‘hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.’ Would it be possible for us to express better the object of this festival ? I think we could choose no more striking figure to represent the new-born Saviour than the comparison of His birth to the sunrise. *In Him is the sun arisen*,—for there is no other true sun for us,—and that not to this or that individual, no, but to our race, to all without exception. That is the thought which the text places before our minds, and upon which we intend to dwell. The text reminds us, on the one hand, that *until the coming of Christ it was night to mankind* ; and, on the other, that *since His appearance, it has become day*.

I. It may certainly seem strange to some that we should call the condition of our race before Christ’s appearance a condition of night. Our text, indeed, describes it as a condition of darkness and the shadow of death, in which they did not know where to find the way of peace, where securely to plant their feet ; but perhaps the gaze of the aged Zacharias could see but dimly, and we are entitled to speak differently, whose gaze upon time past

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has opened wider than that of the priest of the old covenant? Now, if we would understand this point, we must before all things ask, What is the meaning of its being night? It is night where the light is wanting that lightens our way, in whose brightness we are able to distinguish and understand the value of the things which surround us; that light that shows us where there are ways to walk in, the aims which we should pursue, and the means by which we may attain them. Where there is such certainty of knowledge and work, there is day; where that is wanting, the light can only be a dim one; even with open eyes, all knowledge is only fancy, all work only groping in the dark. There no life can bring forth fruit; it may be filled with all kinds of beautiful dreams, but only with dreams; but upon the dream follows an awakening with more bitter pain the more beautiful the dreams were.

But from whence comes the light which renders the same service for the inner sense as the sun in the firmament for the outer? It comes from above; the earth does not produce light for herself; the eye of man cannot lighten itself. The light must indeed come *through* our eye, and also the intellectual light *through* our inner eye; but out of it it does not come. It comes from the Father of Lights, from Him alone from whom we receive all things, and the knowledge of Him alone is the light in which we are made blessed. And light can enter this order of things only when the thought of this heavenly world opens, which is not closed to us, but towards which our endeavour ought to be. That is the light with which we can walk in the right way, with the certainty of arriving at the goal.

So far as the heathen world was illuminated, we know that however richly it was adorned, the light of which we here speak was wanting in it; and at the same time the right use and enjoyment of all the gifts of heart and mind which it had received.

Certainly there, where the Lord manifested himself, in the circle of the people of Israel, it was better. There they knew of God, the Creator of heaven and earth, of the image of God, and a heaven which would be filled with angelic hosts; that was a light, but not yet the light which we need. The heaven was there, but the way to it was for us not yet opened; and as he looked towards it, the heart of the faithful believer of the old covenant asked, 'Is it for thee?' and knew not how to answer this question.

II. Our festival of to-day testifies anew what our text so confidently declares, that the Dayspring from on high has visited those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and guides our feet into the way of peace. Is that, then, truly our full conviction? He who knows himself will not over hastily say yes, but rather earnestly examine himself. It is the heavenly Father Himself who

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reveals Himself to us in Christ ; it is the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth, who draws near to us in Him. He is the second Adam who is from heaven, the son of man seen by Daniel, who comes with the clouds of heaven, who comes to the Ancient of Days, whom they bring near to Him, and to whom are given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. Concerning that there can be no doubt ; and if we doubt, is it not because we have not yet rightly seen Him ? He who wishes to know whether Jesus truly is this heavenly sun, must have seen Him with the eyes of the spirit, for He is no longer visible to the eye of sense ; he must have seen Him with the eye of faith, and not only with the eye of faith, but with the heart of faith, the heart that gives itself up to Him absolutely, prepares itself for Him, and gives Him room ; that truly receives His mild, blessed, holy light, His truth and grace. He who has thus seen Jesus knows that he has seen Him with the eyes of his spirit, even as His disciples saw Him with the eyes of sense.

R. ROTHE,

Sermons for the Christian Year, p. 48.

The Nativity.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through Him might be saved. S. JOHN iii. 16, 17.

I. **W**E look to-day on the infant Jesus as just entering upon that conflict with evil which He waged on our behalf. We regard Him as a Being who, for our sakes, left the glory which He had with the Father. We see in Him the true Son of God, who veiled His Divine in the human nature, in order to carry back to heaven His assumed humanity, to become the firstfruits of a world redeemed from sin and death. We recognise in Him the harbinger of all who, trusting in the merits of His precious blood, attain to the everlasting bliss that He had purchased for them by His Cross and Passion. Therefore it is that we rejoice to-day with exceeding great joy.

What to sinners like ourselves, daily labouring under the burden of our sins, would be the comfort of looking on the life of a merely sinless man ? What encouragement could we derive from His unattainable perfection, if we did not also contemplate Him as God, passing through our earthly trials and sufferings, in order that He might know by experience our need of heavenly succour, our want of an arm mightier than man's to shield us in the hour of strife ? In what should we rejoice, unless we believe that with the knowledge of human

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weakness He has also the power to save to the uttermost those who cry to Him for help?

II. Shall the joy of Christmas then be a thing of the past, when faith was clear and shining? Shall this season degenerate into a meaningless time of mere festivity and social gatherings, stripped of that common bond of gracious and happy union, which we may all find in a risen Saviour who united in Himself the Divine and the human, to make us Godlike in the end? No, it cannot be. Never can it be, so long as we are sensible of what we really are. Never whilst we keep in view the bright destiny which that Saviour has prepared for us. Sinful we are, yet He has come to show how we may become sinless. Mortal we were, until His victory over the past won us immortality. Corrupt now, but through Him incorruptible hereafter. And who is it that effects in us these glorious transformations? Have we not cause to rejoice when we are told, in answer to this question, that 'as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive'?

From the beginning to the end we have no hope but in Him. Conquered by every enemy of our souls, He found us powerless, downcast, and bound; but He has set the prisoners free. He has placed heavenly weapons in our hands and heavenly armour on our limbs. He has Himself fought for us, and led us on to victory, never leaving nor forsaking us until we have the fruit of victory in our hands. And He who has done this for us is the Babe whom we see to-day laid in His lowly manger-bed, in whom we also recognise the Light, the Redeemer, and the Saviour of the world.

CANON PROTHERO,
The Armour of Light, p. 19.

The Incarnation of God.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures), concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. ROMANS i. 1-4.

THERE is a sight which happens every day we live, which, if it happened only once in a long period of time, would excite surprise and admiration beyond anything that the strangest phenomena or the most glorious scene we are acquainted with could call forth. Darkness changes into light, the sun arises over the earth every day; but because the sunrise happens every day, we are unconscious of the

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wonder and magnificence of the event, till something or other makes us *think*, and opens our eyes to what custom had blinded us to. Christmas Day is given to awaken us afresh to the rising of our Eternal Sun over the darkness and despair of the world. Once, at least, in the year we are made to remember what ought to call forth our adoring wonder every day, and all the day long. To-day let us awake to it. To-day let us prepare our hearts to receive the impressions which psalm and hymn and lessons of Scripture are meant to make. To-day 'let us go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.'

I. Such an event as that can have nothing like it, or parallel to it, while this world lasts. It is the turning-point in the history of the world. The gospel of Christ—which as announced by His Church from the first, has made the Incarnation of the Eternal Son what S. Paul made it—the centre and heart of all teaching, worship, obedience, and morality, the fulfilment and end of all that was old, the starting-point of all that was new—the gospel of Christ refuses, and must ever refuse, to compromise with any view of religion which puts this tremendous truth in any less than its paramount and sovereign place. It has been forgotten at times; it has been displaced for a season by ideas and doctrines which the exigencies, or the accidental disputes, or the corrupting fashions of the age brought to the surface; it has been fiercely assailed, or subtly explained away, or shrunk from as something too overwhelming to human imagination. But it re-asserts itself in the latest century as in the first. Let the Christian Church become serious after being careless and frivolous; let Christians become thoughtful after having been superficial and shallow; let them become alive after having been dead, and the first thing which meets them, the first thing that occupies and stirs their minds from their depths, is this amazing and transporting mystery of the Eternal Son, born *man indeed*, to live and die. You may as well divorce the thought from the word in living speech. You may as well divide the soul from the body, and hope to leave the living man, as you may separate from the gospel of the New Testament, from the religion which calls itself Christianity, the belief in the Word made Flesh.

II. The Incarnation was the turning-point in the history of this world; and, as a matter of fact, we have before our eyes the consequences which have followed from it. In the good and in the evil, in what the world seems and what it is, in its tendencies, its motives, its efforts, in what is visibly on its surface and in its secret forces, in the depths of men's hearts and their strongest purposes, that awful Presence, which was once visibly in the world, has made things different in it from what it ever was before. They are incommensurable in the nature of the case, the ancient and the Christian ages:

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there is no common measure between them, and vainly do we try to invent one.

But I turn to another aspect of the subject. We have, each of us, one by one, our concern with this great truth. For each man, as for the world, the Son of God was made Man, to help and enable each man to reach the perfection for which he was made. For each of us, did He humble Himself to this awful condescension of His love; for each one, He was born and died; for each one's restoration and strength and blessing, He has in store all that has been done by His becoming man. His Incarnation has been made known to us, not only for the public creed and confession of the Church, but for the private need and private use, for the personal hope and stay, of each of our souls. And to know and master what it means, to realise, as we say, what it is, and what it is to *us*, is the turning-point of each man's belief.

III. We see in the Incarnation and the Nativity, how God fulfils the promises He makes, and the hopes which He raises, in ways utterly unforeseen and unexpected, utterly inconceivable beforehand, utterly beyond the power of man to anticipate; and, further, we see exemplified in it that widely prevailing law of His government, that in this stage of His dispensations with which we are acquainted—which we call ‘this world’ and ‘this life’—that which is the greatest must stoop to begin from what is humblest, the greatest glories must pass through their hour of obscurity, the greatest strength must rise out of the poorest weakness, the greatest triumphs must have faced their outset of defeat and rebuke, the greatest goodness start unrecognised and misunderstood. S. Paul himself, S. John himself, cannot find words to tell the mystery of accomplished purpose, by which God ‘gathers together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him,’ ‘and hath put all things under His feet and given Him to be Head over all things to the Church, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.’ And here, in Bethlehem, wrapped in the swaddling clothes, He was One in whom the shepherds could see no difference from any other new-born babe.

R. W. CHURCH,
Sermons for Advent and Christmastide, p. 123.

A New Creation.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. GAL. vi. 15.

I. I NEED not dwell long on the first clause of the verse, thrice repeated, which tells us what Christianity *is not*. It is not circumcision, neither is it uncircumcision. These were, in the

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Apostle's day, the two great differences which divided the Christian Church. The Jewish Christian was set against the Gentile, the Gentile Christian was set against the Jew; their habits, thoughts, customs, were directly at variance: each was disposed to exclude the other from all Christian sympathy. Each unquestionably had much to say against the other. Yet to each the Apostle says, 'In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything.' His zeal for his country, as a Hebrew of the Hebrews,—'circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews,'—did not lead him unduly to exalt circumcision. His zeal for Christian liberty, as Apostle of the Gentiles, his long controversy against his bitter opponents amongst the Jews, did not lead him unduly to exalt uncircumcision. Wherever or whatever elsewhere circumcision or uncircumcision might either of them avail, yet 'in Christ Jesus,' who came to unite them both together, neither of them availed anything.

II. How are we to apply this to ourselves? Think for one moment of any of the differences which seem most to separate all or any of us from any classes, from any individuals amongst our fellow-Christians, amongst our fellow-churchmen. Think of those differences in the gravest form in which you like to put them,—think of the church, the party, the sect, the opinions, against which you feel most keenly. And then remember that 'in Christ Jesus' they 'avail nothing at all.' They may avail, they may be of importance, socially, ecclesiastically, politically, philosophically; they may affect us in our dealings with households, with nations, with churches, with commonwealths—but not 'in Christ Jesus.' In Him, who came to visit us on earth,—in Him, who shall return again to judge us,—these things have *no* place.

(1) 'In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision—but a new creature.' 'A new creature'—'a new creation.' This is indeed the subject of this day's thoughts; every part of the services impresses this upon us: let us drive it home to ourselves. 'A new creation in Christ Jesus.' Is it not this which in our Lord Jesus Himself 'avails' most, and is most wonderfully brought before us at this season? We know, we have felt in life what an effect is produced by coming in contact with some new character, some new form or idea of goodness, such as was before unknown to us: what hopes, what elevation of soul, what enlargement of mind, what self-reproach, what self-knowledge, what zeal, what admiration, does it kindle within us! Such a new character, such a new form or idea of goodness in the highest sense, the world met, as she wandered on her way, in the person of Jesus Christ. He came across the path of the erring race of man, just at the time when the

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existing shapes and form of virtue and religion seemed to be wearing themselves out: He came as a new element, a new leaven, into the old corrupted mass. He was literally a new creation. He was, what the Apostle calls him, a second Adam, a new man, a second beginning in the history of our race. From Him, and in Him, the world as it were took a new lease of life. It was this newness, this freshness, this difference from all that had gone before, which, even more than mere power, or wisdom, or goodness, availed in Him to win the world to Himself. Men were arrested by the combination of graces which they had before never seen united; men were attracted by a voice which spake as never man had spoken before; men were touched by a tenderness more awful than severity; men were awed by a wisdom which was majestic from its very simplicity and its loneliness.

(2) Thus it was that the birthday of Christ became the second birthday of the world. Henceforth we no longer reckon our years from the beginning of the Grecian festivals, or the old corrupt empires of the earth, or the old creation of the world,—but from this day. ‘Old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new.’ To a great degree in the world at large, as well as in Christ Himself, the real force and power of His Spirit and of His coming is seen in ‘the *new* creation’ which has passed over the face of the earth since He deigned to visit us.

(3) But there is yet a fuller and deeper sense in which, not only as regards the world at large, but our own selves, ‘a new creature’ is the sum and substance of the gospel of Christ. ‘If any man be in Christ,’ says the Apostle, ‘he is a new creature.’ ‘Except a man be born again,’ says our Lord Himself, ‘he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ ‘To as many as believed in Him,’ we heard in the Gospel of this morning, ‘He gave power to become the sons of God.’

We see men moving to and fro in the world without purpose, without interest; we say, ‘Such an one seems to be without a mind, without a soul.’ Give that man an earnest purpose, a serious interest in life. This is in a limited, yet true sense, ‘to become a new creature.’ We know, also, what it is to be absorbed in the things of the day, the interest of the moment,—business, pleasure, party, study. To be raised above these things into a higher world, to feel that there is nothing so hateful as sin, nothing so lovely as goodness, to have a keen sense of our own shortcomings, to know the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the exceeding brightness of justice, purity, holiness—to feel the law of God to be sweeter than honey and the honeycomb—to be glad when we think or hear of the grace, the truth, the love of Christ—to look forward with pleasure to being with Him and with just men made perfect, this is in a still fuller

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measure to become a new creature. ‘Up and be *doing*’ is the word that comes from God to each of us. Leave some ‘good work’ behind you that shall not be wholly lost when you have passed away. *Do* something worth living for, worth dying for; *do* something to show that you have a mind and a heart and a soul within you. Let it be the beginning to us of a new creation; let the birthday of Christ our Saviour be the birthday of our souls also.

A. P. STANLEY,
Canterbury Sermons, p. 195.

The Incarnation, a Lesson of Humility

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the Form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant. PHILIPPIANS ii. 5-7.

‘**H**E emptied Himself.’ Such is the full force of the amazing word, for which we read ‘He made Himself of no reputation.’ So much does God’s Holy Word often contain in one word, partaking not of our infirmity of language, but of His Infinity. What He had not been, He became; and that so as to seem not to be what He was. He became what He was not! Awful words to use; ‘God became,’ as though the Unchangeable could change. Yet He says, ‘the Word, who was God, became Flesh;’ became, not by ceasing to be what He was, but by taking unto Himself what He was not; by veiling Himself under that Flesh which He united for ever with Himself. ‘He emptied Himself.’ He, the Creator, not only made himself to need the creatures which He had formed, and was without them—He was hungry, and thirsty, and wearied, but even in the things which He wrought, He depended not alone on the Godhead within Him, but on the Father. His works were not His own works, but His Father’s. He came to do not His own will, but His Father’s, although He and the Father were One, and He was that will. He was content to seem to effect nothing. He appeared but to prepare His own way. His visible ministry was scarcely different from that of His forerunner; He took up the words of His servant, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.’ He baptized not to Himself, whom He hid. He ‘came not in His own name.’ He was content, while on earth, not to ‘see the travail of His own soul.’ He gave not the Spirit. ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth, shall draw all men unto Me.’ ‘Greater works,’ saith He to His disciples, ‘than these shall he do that believeth on Me, because I go to the Father.’ His visible Presence was but a preparation for His invisible. His Presence was weak, and ‘despised and rejected;’ His absence was with power. He sowed, for His servants to reap. He laid the

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foundation, even Himself ; but deep, hidden, invisible, whereon His servants were to build.

I. This is the special festival of humility, as of joy, a lowly joy, a joy of the lowly. Our Lord, from the manger, where, for our sakes, He deigned to lie, preacheth to us humility. This was the beginning and end of His teaching. He taught it in action now, by His birth ; He taught in all His life and sufferings ; He summed up His teaching in this, a little before those sufferings, when He washed His disciples' feet, and said, 'Know ye what I have done to you ? If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' He not merely, as in the days of His flesh, setteth before us, His disciples, a little child, and bids us become like it, if we would 'enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ;' He has Himself become that little Child. Year by year He sets Himself before us, a little Child, in great humility, and bids us become like Him, that when He appears again, in His glorious majesty, we may again be made like Him.

God Incarnate preaches humility to His creatures. For this is the foundation of the whole building of Christian virtues ; or rather, thus alone can we reach that foundation, whereon alone we can build securely. What we have is His gift ; what we hope for is still His gift ; our price, His blood ; ourselves, His purchase ; our life, His within us ; our sanctification, Himself ; our works, His grace, preventing, working, finishing ; our hope, His pardoning mercy, accepting what He gave, filling up what we lack, 'forgiving all our iniquities, healing at length and for ever 'all our infirmities, redeeming our life from destruction, crowning' His Redeemed, as His own gift still, 'with mercy and loving-kindness,' and filling our emptiness with His endless good.

II. But not only in general or towards Him have we need of humility. It enters in detail into each Christian grace, so that it has been said, 'wellnigh the whole substance of the Christian discipline is humility.' Every mountain of human pride must be brought low, to prepare the Lord's way ; and so shall the lowly valley be exalted. Without humility, there can be no resignation, since humility alone knows its sufferings and sorrows to be less than it deserves ; no contentment, for humility alone knows that it has more blessings than it deserves ; no peace, for contention cometh of want of humility ; no kindness, for pride envieth ; and this S. Paul assigns as the very reason why 'love envieth not,' that it 'is not puffed up,' that is, it is humble. If love be the summit of all virtue, humility is the foundation. He humbled Himself because He loved us : we must be

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

humble in order to love Him ; for to such only will He impart His love. The Publican 'would not so much as lift up his eyes to Heaven,' and God was more pleased with the confession of sins in the sinner, than in the recounting of the virtues of the righteous. The Canaanitish woman was content with the portion of the dogs, and she had 'the children's bread.' The gate of life is low as well as narrow. Through the lowly portal of repentance are we brought into the Church ; and humble as little children must we again become if we would enter the everlasting gates.

Dig deep then the foundation of humility, so only mayest thou hope to reach the height of charity ; for by humility alone canst thou reach that Rock, which shall not be shaken, that is, Christ. Founded by humility on that Rock, the storms of the world shall not shake thee, the torrent of evil custom shall not bear thee away, the empty winds of vanity shall not cast thee down. Founded deep on that Rock, thou mayest build day by day that tower whose top shall reach unto heaven, to the very Presence of God, the sight of God, and shalt be able to finish it ; for He shall raise thee thither, who for thy sake abased Himself to us.

E. B. PUSEY,
Parochial Sermons, p. 61.

A Christmas Invitation.

Come unto Me. S. MATTHEW xi. 28.

I. **T**O-DAY we have an invitation from the Lord Jesus to go even unto Bethlehem. He says, 'Come to Me.' He bids us come to Him at different times and different places. At Christmas and Epiphany He bids us come to Him as a little child at Bethlehem. In Lent He calls us to Him in the wilderness, and tells us to fast, and to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. On Good Friday He calls us to Calvary, and bids us take up our Cross, and follow Him. Where does Jesus invite us on Easter Day ? To a garden, and to a grave, where the stone is rolled away, and He tells us that because He is risen from the dead, we shall rise also. Then on Ascension Day He invites us to a mountain to see Him go up to heaven ; and He is always asking us to turn our thoughts and wishes upwards to that heaven, and so that one day He may invite us to come to Him there, and 'to be ever with the Lord.' Well, to-day we must think of the child Christ's invitation to children to go to Bethlehem. We cannot of course travel to-day to that stable among the wild hills. Yet in one sense we *can* go there. I left the home where I lived as a child many years ago. The place is all changed now, yet I often go there. I go there in *memory*, I picture all the

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days when I lived there as a boy. We can take our thoughts and feelings to a place, although we cannot take our bodies. Let us in heart and mind go 'even unto Bethlehem.'

II. Every one gives presents at Christmas-time. Jesus has given you presents, life, and health, and parents, and brothers, and sisters, and a beautiful world; and He promises you something more, a bright and glorious home in heaven, and 'such good things as pass man's understanding.' Won't you take a present to Jesus? Do you know what He values most?—your *love*. The best Christmas present to the holy child Jesus is a little child's *love*. And remember, you must *show* your *love*, not merely talk about it. Show it by trying to be good children, by watching over your words and tempers. Show it by being kind and gentle to others—to your parents, your teachers, your schoolmates. When you show *love* to one another you show *love* to Jesus.

III. Isaiah tells us that a time shall come when the fierce beasts shall be tame and gentle, and 'a little child shall lead them.' In one sense that prophecy has been fulfilled. The little child who was born on Christmas Day has changed the history of the world. Before Christ came the world was full of fierce and cruel nations, more savage than the wild beasts. Satan ruled over the heathen, making them blood-thirsty and violent, teaching the strong to trample on the weak, leading the powerful to make slaves of the feeble. Jesus came, and brought the light of truth into the world, and it was changed. Fierce men became gentle, proud men became humble, a little child was leading them. There are plenty of cruel and proud people among us now, but it is because they won't let Jesus lead them.

If you would keep your hands from sinning, ask Jesus to take you by the hand, and lead you. You know He has promised to be always with you. Long before the first Christmas Day the prophet Isaiah foretold that a child should be born, and He was to have a special name, can you tell me what it was? *Immanuel*, that is, *God with us*. He calls to us to-day, as it were, from the poor manger, and says, 'Come unto Me, learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.'

H. J. WILMOT BURDON,

The Children's Bread, p. 18.

VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

The Incarnation. By the Incarnation, God, who was incomprehensible, vouchsafed to be comprehended in one place; by the

Sacrament of Sacraments, Christ, who was according to His human

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nature comprehensible, becomes as it were infinite, and is at one time in all the places of the world. By the Incarnation, God, who was invisible, became visible, and was thus seen of the eyes of men; by that Sacrament, Christ, who was visible, becomes invisible, because neither do we, nor can we, therein see Him. By the Incarnation, God, who was immortal and impassible, became mortal and passible; not only became passible, but of a verity suffered and died: in the Sacrament, though He thus humbles Himself, He can die no more, He can suffer no more, He can become no more subject to the ordinary circumstances of that material under which He is received: at once so glorious and so lowly: at once so exposing Himself to, and yet so incapable of corruption.—*Vieyra.*

CHRIST came in the form of a slave, to give liberty to those who were in bondage (Phil. ii. 7).—*S. Basil.*

THE Son came out from the Father to help us to come out from the world: He descended to us to enable us to ascend to Him.—*S. Antony of Padua.*

As the face of Moses drew a certain effulgence of glory from the full blaze of the Divine Majesty (Exod. xxxiv. 33; 2 Cor. iii. 13), so our flesh, dark, weak, and sinful in itself, has, from its contact with, or rather co-incorporation into, our Lord's human nature, received the seeds in the present life of that which will in the life to come be its perfect and eternal glorification (1 Cor. xv. 45-49).—*S. Ambrose.*

GOD had prepared for Christ's coming by three nations: two for temporal purposes, and one for spiritual.

The *Jew* was dispersed throughout the world to witness for God.

The *Greek* had shaped his wondrous language; and the *Roman* had by arms conquered the known world, and made it one empire.

Here were the means of Christ's drawing all men unto Himself, of setting up the kingdom of God. And it is remarkable that there was then a general expectation of all nations—'a general hush' (for the temple of Janus was shut), a looking towards Judæa for what was to be done.—*Maclear.*

Cf. the threefold inscription on the cross, written in *Hebrew and Greek and Latin.*

It has been the general opinion from the foundation of the Church, that whether Adam had fallen or not, the Second Adam

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would nevertheless have been incarnate (Acts xv. 18; 1 S. Peter i. 20).—*Peter Lombard.*

The name of Jesus.

S. MATTHEW
i. 21.

S. BERNARD has summed up the pleasurableness of His name ‘Jesus’ in few but very sweet words: *Nomen Jesu est mel in ore, melos in aure, et jubilum in corde.*

All our reasonable acts are divided into speaking, hearing, and thinking; and lo! we cannot speak of Him, but He is as *honey in our mouths*; and if we hear of Him, the talk doth make the best *melody in our ears*; finally, the greatest *joy of our heart*, and the truest also, springeth from our meditation of Him (Ps. xix. 10, xlivi. 4; Cant. iv. 11, v. 16; Hag. ii. 6-9).—*Bishop Lake.*

S. MATTHEW
iv. 1-12.

HAD He not, as man, vanquished the enemy of mankind, that enemy would not justly have been overcome (Gen. iii. 6-12, 15).—*S. Irenaeus.*

The earth wondered, at Christ’s nativity, to see a new star in heaven; but heaven might rather wonder to see a new sun on earth (Ps. lxix. 35; Isa. xliv. 23; S. Matt. ii. 10).—*Dr. Richard Clarke.*

WHEN the eye gazes on the sun, it is more tormented with the brightness than pleased with the beauty of it; but when the beams are transmitted through a coloured medium, they are more temperate, and sweetened to the sight. The Eternal Word, shining in His full glory, the more bright, the less visible is He to mortal eyes; but the Incarnate Word is eclipsed and allayed by a veil of flesh (Heb. x. 20), and so made accessible to us. God, out of a tender respect to our frailty and fears, promised to raise up a Prophet, clothed in our nature (Exod. xx. 18, 19; Deut. xviii. 15-19), that we might comfortably and quietly receive His instructions (Job xxiii. 6, 7; S. Luke iv. 20-22; S. John i. 18).

First Sunday after Christmas

Scriptures Proper to the Day.

EPISLLE	.	.	.	GAL. IV. 1-7.
GOSPEL	.	.	.	S. MATT. I. 18-25.
FIRST MORNING LESSON	.			ISA. XXXV.
FIRST EVENING LESSON	.			ISA. XXXVIII. OR ISA. XL.
SECOND LESSONS	.			ORDINARY.

I COMPLETE SERMONS

Reading Life.

Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all. GALATIANS iv. 1.



HERE is nothing final in the character of this world. But all betrays infancy. Everything is in a state of preparation. No created thing hath reached maturity. We move up and down amidst the reflections of the future.

We often speak of ‘the types of the *Old Testament*.’ Are there no ‘types’ in the *New*? May not the things—in the midst of which we are living—be all typical? The antitypes of the Jewish were no less themselves the types of a heavenly dispensation.

The Jews did not understand, in their day, that their system was foreshadowing. May we not be walking in the same ignorance, and not see the foreshadowings which make the Christian dispensation?

What and if we shall find presently that the great realities and substances are all yet to come; and that these, these are only their pictures?

Certainly the material world has not reached its destination. The air we breathe, the sky we look on, the soil we tread, are only to go to make a ‘new heaven and a new earth.’

And the Divine government, which is now, is mainly to illustrate the government which is to come.

We have churches now; but they are only to prepare us for a state where there shall be no church, because every spot shall be holy.

We have teaching now; but it is only to fit us for a condition where ‘they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every

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man his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; for they shall all know Him.

We have a priesthood now. But will there be any priesthood ? Will there be even the priesthood of Christ—in that sinless state, when the mediatorial throne shall be no longer needed ; but ‘ the Son Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all ’?

Our Bibles, are they for ever ? Or do they prepare us to read the open book of truth and Christ, when we shall ‘ see face to face, and know as we are known ’?

And the blessed Sacraments,—shall we want ‘ the outward sign of inward grace,’ when we ‘ see the King in His beauty,’ and sit at His table, and feed at His very hand ?

Then, am I not right that all things are shadowy, that our very religion is but the imaging of better things to come,—that the manhood of our existence is not arrived,—that the oldest man on earth is but a babe in comparison with the fulness of being that shall be developed presently,—and that ‘ the heir, so long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all ’?

This is the thought which I wish to press upon your consideration this morning, that we are all in training,—that this world is one large training-school,—where we are placed, for a little while, to learn to fulfil the duties of that great service for which we were destined and created.

Training consists of three things : *instruction*, which is the imparting knowledge, and giving new ideas ; *education*, which is the drawing out and directing the powers of mind and heart : and *moral discipline*, which is the moulding of character, and the formation of good habits.

This is just what life is. First, we are here to get knowledge, and new ideas about the things of God.

How shall we enter heaven without some previous knowledge of it : its conditions, its employments ? Therefore all things are originated for it. Christ the great Teacher, the Holy Spirit His voice, the Bible the lesson-book, truth, eternal truth, the subject-matter.

Do not think little of knowledge. Is it the heart only which is to be prepared for heaven ? Why not the mind ? Shall we pass, think you, into that world, never having rehearsed its praises, nor learnt its business, nor become acquainted with its God ?

What and if it should prove that, in any sense or degree, we are to begin, in another world, where we leave off here ? How will it fare with those who know their Bible so little, and who study religion with such a meagre superficiality ?

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Say, that your soul is converted: say, that you are safe: say, that you are a child of God: say, that you are 'an heir.' Is this all? Has the child nothing to learn of the nature of the occupation of the life which is before it? Must not the intellect be furnished, guided, for its higher exercises? Must we not know what we are to do in heaven, before we can be admitted there?

Now, understand this. You cannot see the truths you are to learn till your heart is changed. This is what Christ meant—' Except a man be born again, he cannot see,'—get any view, have any idea—'he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

But, that done, then in the Church on earth, which is the school, you are set to learn great things for another life. They might all be summed up in one word,—'Christ.' The being of Christ, the work of Christ, the glory of Christ, the claim of Christ, the presence of Christ, the coming of Christ, the preciousness of Christ, the union with Christ, the service of Christ, the liberty of Christ, the image of Christ, the eternity of the enjoyment of Christ; the past Christ, the present Christ, the future Christ: the title to heaven, the meetness for heaven, the love of heaven; all Christ.

There is much instruction needed for all this. And many new ideas will unfold themselves. And if there is no greater pleasure on this earth than to get a new idea, what must it be when the new ideas are these: to inform the mind about God, to see every day some new, fresh beauty in Jesus, to impregnate the understanding with the Infinite?

Do you know, have you learnt your lesson? Are you ready for the great examination? Are you 'well up' in the themes of saints and angels? Could you hold communion with them? Can you think their thoughts, and speak their language, and do their work? Have you trained? Are you training now in the science and the philosophy of the great after-life?

But let me speak to you, secondly, of your education for another world, according to the strict meaning of the word Education.

You are probably aware that the word 'education' means 'to draw out,' 'to educe.' So that when we educate a child, it is, literally and properly, that we draw out what is in the child. For in this, as in everything else, we can only follow God. We can only employ, and by employing and exercising, increase the powers which God has implanted in the child.

As, for example, memory, imagination, understanding, reasoning, the natural talent for any art: we only educe what we find. We may add information, and we may aid effort, and guide thought or action; but we cannot create or give a power which is not. We only educe. Education can do no more.

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Now, see this in you. There is in you, at this moment, all that is needed to make you a Christian, to make you a saint, to make you heavenly. I may assume it that the Spirit works in you. Your conscience—which is the Holy Ghost—speaks: you have convictions: you feel drawings: you are subject to good desires and aspirations: you are endowed with spiritual capacities: you have the germs of love, and service, and holiness.

There are the elements of the highest things in you. All that is wanted is to bring them out into light and action. They only require development. Use well what is in you, and you will be a great Christian. There is no height to which you might not rise. It only needs educating.

And this is in the training. The very metaphor ‘training’ explains it.

The gardener does not make the branches and the tendrils; but he lays them out, he guides them, he gives each its proper place and order. He lops what is redundant; he fastens and makes sure what is good.

You are just what God has made you, and as the Holy Ghost breathes in you. All you have to do is to cherish, to elicit, to point. More you cannot do, less you must not do.

But be sure of this, there is that in you which, if you will, and if you will only let it, can expand into all that is happy, and all that is holy, and all that is useful, and all that is Divine, here and for ever.

Now, thirdly, the way in which this is to be done we call discipline, the third part of training. Self-discipline and God’s discipline. And yet they are not two, for God’s discipline is to make and to take effect through self-discipline. Self-discipline is the accompaniment of God’s discipline. Do not count discipline a hard word. In God’s vocabulary, discipline is only another word for love.

It is man’s wrong disciplining which has made the word sound harsh, through our hard, slow, stubborn, sinful nature. There cannot be discipline without friction, without wrench, without struggle.

But a victory over self is such a very pleasant thing. Even the trying brings so much comfort to a good conscience, and God disciplines us with so much thought and tender consideration, and the compensations are so accurate and so great, that discipline itself soon loses to you its sterner sense, and becomes the element of all happiness.

Only accept your discipline from God. Work lovingly, and you will not be long before you love. Life is a very poor thing without it.

But what makes it? Everything makes it. A sorrow is a discipline

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to make a thought; and a joy is a discipline to prove the thought and give it scope.

Every event that happens to you is a discipline—to one or other parts of your character.

See, again, the dresser. He brings out one bit in the sunshine; another he throws into the shade. One has more liberty than another. One he pierces with a nail; another he does not. But each has all in its turn.

So God's way with you. For the child has many schoolmasters, and 'the tutors and the governors' which control the childhood of this present life, are very various.

Discipline is to form habits. Do not forget that you are placed here mainly to form habits,—to learn to do and be what you are to do and be eternally.

Infallibly, the habit you make will abide with you beyond the grave. You are shaping your own heaven, or your own hell! And every act goes towards a habit; and every habit goes towards immortality.

To form a good habit must always involve the unforming a bad one.

It is impossible to say which comes first—for they mutually act and re-act upon each other. Only, to form the good habit, and unform the bad one, everything that happens to you is an assign of God; and this is the way: outward discipline, of joy or sorrow, produces an inward discipline which is the work of the Holy Ghost. So you begin to hold yourself in hand, to exercise self-control, patience, resolution; to conquer and mortify self in all self's myriad shapes; to force yourselves to duties, that they may become pleasures; to cultivate pious thoughts, acts of devotion and religious communion, and a holy walk, which are the things you are to do for ever and ever.

Meanwhile, all outward things are working for you. You will find yourselves in strange circumstances. But all to practise and increase some grace, and especially a lacking one. So the Providence will often be just the most difficult to bear, because it comes for the very reason that it may be in collision with the characteristic sin of your nature, and each circumstance has its own distinct, definite end; one to cultivate 'love'; another, 'joy'; another, 'peace'; another, 'long-suffering'; another, 'gentleness'; another, 'goodness'; another, 'faith'; another, 'meekness'; another, 'temperance'; that all 'the fruits' may grow and ripen, and the tree be ready for its transplanting, to be fragrant and fertile in another soil.

This then is the way to read life. You may be a child of God, and as a child of God you are, in reversion at least, 'lord of

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all.' But you are now in God's training-school, 'under tutors and governors' until the time appointed by the Father.' Then, when 'the tutors and governors' of His grace and providence have done their work, which He has set them to do, for instruction, for education, for discipline, and you have learnt your service, then you will go home, and be one of His trained ones, where 'His servants serve Him' indeed!

J. VAUGHAN,

Sermons, Eighth Series, p. 69.

Not one Good Thing hath Failed us.

Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

JOSHUA xxviii. 14.

NO one would wish to let the year quite run out, until he had stopped to trace—in one or two of the passages—'the way' by which he has been 'led.' And my duty is, Joshua-like, to try to help you in the retrospect.

Retrospect, indeed, like self-examination, of which it is a part, should be the exception of man's thoughts; and never be but as an aid to prospect.

But such a season as this is one of the exceptional times. And God Himself says: 'Thou shalt remember all the way by which the Lord thy God hath led thee.'

Nevertheless, I know the danger, and I speak cautiously. Forgetfulness is to the full as great a gift as memory. There is no attitude of God more kind and dear to us than that He forgets. 'I will not remember.' And life would be intolerable, if every memory preserved its bitterness! What should we do without the 'tonings of time,—and the mellowings of age,—and the obliviouss of space?

What shall we say then? Shall we remember our joys, and not our sorrows? Our victories, and not our battles? God's grace, and not our sins? Let all be in proportion,—expecting that the lights will be more than the shadows. What are lights? What are shadows?

It is a gracious law of our nature, that we forget our sorrows more than our joys. God forbid that we should infringe upon so merciful an enactment!

But Joshua's rule will be always right. Remember much more what God has done to you, than what you have done either for God, or against God.

The great feature of the year, printed upon it, in the largest characters, is faithfulness—the Father's faithfulness,—God's truth to His own engagements: 'Not one thing hath failed.'

But here an objection may at once arise. Some will say: 'But I

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have had failures ; many failures : and sometimes where I had a right to expect and command successes.' And this thought may go further still : ' Has God been always faithful to all His promises to me ? Have I not asked Him what He has not given ? Has He given me all the strength, and all the comfort, and all the peace, and all the good results, that I legitimately looked for at His hands ? '

Now, as respects this objection, let me say this much. We are very poor judges of what is a failure,—for a temporal failure may be essential to a spiritual success ; and the failure itself may be an actual part of a success, which success would not have been, unless the failure had, by stopping one path, thrown us into another, where that success lay ; and the discipline of the disappointment may have been necessary to the safety of the attainment when it came.

Life is a book which can never be understood by reading *one* of its chapters.

And those who have lived less years than Joshua, have yet lived long enough to know, from actual experience and observation, that very few, when they look back upon a long course, ever regret what they once called their failures and their trials,—while many regret, bitterly regret, many things which they once called their prosperity ! So that they have learned to place failures high up in the list of ' the good things which the Lord God spake concerning them.'

Nor must we forget that, among ' the good things ' promised, were effort, and energy, and wisdom, and patience ; and were not these given ? and is it not because these were given, and not used, that therefore the failure came ? for which failure, therefore, you only are responsible.

And consider yet two more things. It is only with promised things that we have to do. It is ' the good things which the Lord our God spake concerning us.' Faith hath its province only within the promise. If you go out of a promise you may have a general hope, but it is not faith.

Now I ask, Has any one distinctly promised thing not come to you ? Have you ever yet once, this year, earnestly prayed for any spiritual blessing, then waited for it, and that blessing has not come ?

And once more—if it hath not come, it may be only because its time has not yet arrived. It may be on the road now,—for God promises *what*, not *when*.

Having then, thus far, endeavoured to vindicate God, in those things in which it might seem, at first sight, that some of His truth hath ' failed,' let us go on to look at a few of the proofs which we all have had, this year, of God's exceeding faithfulness.

All the year round—notwithstanding that this earth has teemed with wickedness,—notwithstanding that the rich have been so selfish,

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and the poor so ungrateful,—notwithstanding the greed for money everywhere,—notwithstanding that the dearest relationships of life have been so disjointed and abused,—notwithstanding our sad divisions and discords,—still, the morning has succeeded the evening, and the evening has succeeded the morning, though each sun rose and set on such black eclipse, the chain of nature has never dropped a link: ‘seed-time and harvest, the cold and heat,’ each performing alike its own necessary beneficent part in one great whole, ‘hath not ceased’; and the higher covenant of God’s grace has never wanted that mirror into which He Himself has taught us to look for its reflection: ‘for this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.’

So it has come to pass. Here we are all gathered together this morning, through God’s amazing faithfulness. Not yet cut down! Here we are all to count up all our mercies!

Let us look, first, at some of the wider circles.

Our national blessings have been very great this year. After all our doubts and fears, ‘our land has yielded her increase,’ with more than her wonted abundance. The crops have filled our barns with plenty. Bread is cheap. Wages are high. Work is abundant. A spirit of peace and contentment has been restored where it had been broken. No foe has molested us. The year has been almost entirely free from war. Commerce is increased. Wealth was never so great. Loyalty has never swerved. Confidence stands firm. So the good hand of our God has been upon our land, and ‘not one thing has failed’ of all wherein He gave us cause to trust Him!

Our Church has been greatly agitated with conflicting opinions; and opposite currents of thought, running violently, have made the hearts of men to swell with their contending forces.

But let us not forget that this is in the promise: ‘I come not to send peace, but a sword.’

Is it not for the exercise of many graces—of toleration, catholicity, and charity? Does it not evoke the more prayer? And does it not send on the eye to the Advent when He shall come, and ‘sit a priest upon His throne’?

In the midst of our distractions, our Church has great tokens for good. Hitherto, at least, we have not separated one from another: and our Church is *whole*. Every section of it is instinct with life and energy.

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The number of churches has grown with unprecedented rapidity over the land. All the means of grace are multiplied.

The clergy are much more earnest ; the communicants have greatly increased, and are increasing.

Foreign missions were never so well supplied,—either with money or with men. The great duty and privilege of intercession for missions has been recognised.

And perhaps, above all the signs of good, such a spirit of evangelisation for the conversion of souls at home has been poured upon the Church, as perhaps has had no parallel in the Church's history. Home missions—some regular, some more or less irregular—have been everywhere ; and wonderful blessing has been given to all in awakening, and reclaiming, and saving, with almost Pentecostal power, multitudes.

For all these things we can only adore God's faithfulness, and say : 'To us belong shame and confusion of face, as it is this day ; to the Lord our God belongeth mercy.'

When I pass to things of private and personal interest, I come to subjects not less important, but less suited to this place : and I can only touch them superficially, with a light hand.

One characteristic I am sure there has been in the history of God's dealings with every one of us during the past year : we have been always in a system of beautiful balance : the joys and the sorrows,—the encouragements and the disappointments,—the trials and the strength,—the need and the supply—have been in a strange equipoise. The whole government of God has been compensatory.

What sick person, what bereaved person could not speak of the balancings ? So is it said : 'God hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing *after Him*.'

Look for the balancings. If you have never traced it, you will be surprised to find the number and the accuracy of the balancings of life.

Or take another point of the year. In the wise, measured, ordered dealings of God with you, you will find that there has been a singular care taken of you in the little things. If you want to trace God, you must do it in the detail and the *minutiae* of life. Nowhere are His footsteps so plain as in the very small things, as we call small.

Only look at your answers to prayer, at the interpositions of God's hand, and the guidings of His Spirit in the little things of the past year. And, as in nature the disclosures of the microscope give us a more endearing view of God than the discoveries of the telescope, so it will be in what might seem the trifles of life—in the superintending care of atoms—in the delicate pencilings of His hand—that you will find cause most to own and admire the tenderness and the truth of God.

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It is not too much to say that, by selecting and by concentrating your mind upon one of His gracious providences, and that one about some very little thing, you will get a truer and more impressive view of what God and His faithfulness are, than by any large and collective observation.

You will see such accuracy, such individuality, such painstaking, such forethought, that when you turn to think on what a poor, miserable, insignificant, sinful worm all this has been expended, you will only wonder, and exclaim: ‘And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?’

We all have our dark passages this year,—our mysteries,—our gnawing grief,—known only to ourselves; and the heavy discipline of a Father’s hands. We could not quote Joshua’s words if we had not.

All those to whom those words were spoken had experienced, most painfully, the trials of life. They had wandered in a desert for forty years. Not one of those who stood there had either of his parents living. They had lost many who were dear to them. All along faith had been kept upon the stretch. They had been led in paths which they knew not. Great had been their plagues, their punishments, their battles, their hard treatment, their defeats; but the presence had never left them: the manna and the water never ceased; again and again they had been fondled, and the strange ways all came right.

And now what was the end of it all? Two things. Humiliation and Canaan. Humiliation and Canaan. ‘Forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee,’ and all ‘to do thee good in thy latter end.’

So with us. Among ‘the good things which the Lord our God spake concerning us,’ afflictions are a very large part. See how He has bound them up with our best mercies. ‘Now the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, *after that ye have suffered a while*, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.’

And they have come. Few have passed this year without a sorrow!

To some—it has come, crushingly and desolatingly, in the awful chasm of a bereavement!

To some—it has been the continual wear of some hidden grief, which could tell itself to no one!

To some—it has been an anxiety which never slept.

To some—the daily friction of little cares and worries!

Some have been wounded by man! Some have been stricken by God’s hand alone.

COMPLETE SERMONS

Long and weary waitings have been the lot of some! And some have been in the school of bodily pain! Spiritual burdens have been laid heavy upon some hearts! And some have been visited with very sore temptations! With many, many, it has been a long, long year!

But it is all in the promises. Had these things not been, then God's truth had not been.

But have not 'the consolations' been great? Has not God's presence been a greater reality to you than it all? Has not the Holy Spirit done more of His blessed work? and Christ been nearer?

O what daily proofs you have had, in the midst of your sorrows, of God's loving care! How your table has been spread for you every morning! Your family gathering round you, in all their dear loves, day after day. The lulls that came in the storms! the secret still small voices! the quiet seasons! Jesus more, and heaven nearer!

And what is it all—all these lessons of the desert,—all these ups and downs of the way,—all these abasements and these comfortings in this chequered map of our life—what is it all? What is the end? Humiliation and heaven. Humiliation and heaven. I cannot separate them—humiliation and heaven!

As life goes on, things which were matters of faith, in earlier years, are matters of fact and experience in later life; and we ought to be bolder and more trusting every year we live, if it were only for this—because theories have become realities; and we have proved what we once could only take upon trust,—the faithfulness of God: so that this is our argument: 'Thou hast been our succour; leave us not, neither forsake us, O God of our salvation.'

It is a singular coincidence—that the natural year always ends just as the spiritual life—the life of Jesus—begins, in the Church's calendar.

Let us take the allegory. Let grace live and nature die. We go on to a future of Jesus, and we bury a human past; but not till we have written its epitaph: 'Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord our God spake concerning us; all are come to pass unto us, and not one thing hath failed thereof.'

J. VAUGHAN.
Brighton Pulpit, No. 926.

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II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

The Inheritance of Saints.

Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. **GALATIANS iv. 1, 2.**

I.



PAUL goes on to say that for us this time has come; that we are no longer servants but sons; 'and, if sons, heirs of God through Christ.' But the race of mankind, according to this similitude, were once 'children in bondage under the elements of the world;' children, having this world's knowledge only, wherewith to fill up and fashion the outline of their Creator, but

who yet were made in the image of God, and could not help feeling His Divine kindred, and that they were born to something greater than sin, and pain, and death. But so it was. Mankind, made for immortality, had yet to wait in darkness and ignorance the time appointed of the Father. Then, when that time came, it was made manifest, what God meant man for. The seeming slave was indeed the free son, lord of all his Father's love; the child kept in ignorance of his Father's will, and made subject to tutors and governors, had come at last to be the responsible man with his eyes opened to his fortunes and to his duties; made known at last to his Father in heaven and brought near to Him; intrusted with his own amazing future and inconceivable hopes. Since Christ was born, men have learned that they are indeed, what before they only dreamed of being, sons of God. They are dealt with no longer as servants who must obey, as children who know not why they obey, but as grown men who know their fitness to learn the truth, and to rule themselves. They have been made acquainted with the mystery of God's counsels; they have learned the unutterable wonders of the world to come, and the eternal weight of glory laid up in store for the sons of God. Since Christ was born, since that last great Epiphany to the world of its true object, and of the real purposes of its Maker, this change has been. We are no longer children, differing nothing from servants in tutelage and bondage to the end of the world, knowing nothing but this world for the object of all our hopes and actions. We are now far beyond the wisest of the heathen; we are in close relationship to God. We may approach Him with a more intelligent confidence and a deeper affection than the most favoured of the Jews. Christ has made us sons of God and

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inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. That is our lot and God's plan, as S. Paul teaches us, and we all know that he does not stint the magnificence and strength of his words in describing how, before all time, we were destined to the high estate of those whom God had taken for His children. But we also know, and no one recognises it more than S. Paul, that there is another side to this. With the great change that has made known to us what our place and condition in God's family and kingdom are—that we are exalted ; endowed with gifts, holding the surest pledges of our endless life ; yet the outward contrast still continues between what we believe that we are and what we seem to be. We are still in the world ; we still have to live by faith and to wait in hope ; we still look forward to that which we have not yet, though we are sure that it is to be. We are still strangers and pilgrims on the road ; not in our true country or home, sons of God—our true character is not yet revealed. We know not yet what we shall be ; the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation that we are sons of God. Made free from bondage, yet are we still longing and looking forward for that which comes not yet, 'the glorious liberty of the children of God.' With our eyes open to know our Father in heaven ; to know the truth of what He is, and what we are ; yet still we know but in part, for we are weak, mistaken, short-sighted, and short-lived creatures, and we can but behold it as in a glass darkly, and not face to face. It is Scripture which calls us by anticipation what we are indeed most truly in heart, but what we are not yet fully and completely. In this as in all things belonging to us we have a double character. We belong in truth to both worlds. We are, and we are not, redeemed from mortality ; we are, and we are not, subject to the law ; we are, and we are not, citizens of heaven. S. Paul, calling himself the possessor of all things, yet declares himself, alluding of course to this life only, as 'of all men the most miserable.' He had indeed the certainty of all that Christ had promised to give him, but he had also, great Apostle as he was, to fulfil his preparation here ; to learn in the bitter school of Time the lessons needed to fit even him for immortality ; to accomplish the life of this present state which God appoints to all He calls into being. While that was going on he had to take its chances and its uncertainties, to submit to its limitation, its caprice, its humble and transitory duties, and at last to drink its bitter cup. So that, though we are still the sons of God, and though Christ is manifest to the world and the true light shines upon us, yet, as S. Paul describes, we are children in bondage under the elements of the world ; children unconscious of our real prospects ; heirs to an inheritance of which we know not the value ; holding on to promises of which we hardly know the meaning ; differing as yet

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nothing from servants, and kept under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by our Father.

II. This is the true story ; this describes our condition here. It is described as a state in which the circumstances of our life from the cradle to the grave, all the things we meet with in it, all the persons we have to do with, all the changes and chances in it, its sweets and its bitters, its brightness and its darkness, its sins, its errors, its temptations, its punishments and its losses, its defeats and its triumphs, its knowledge and its ignorance, its wisdom and its follies, are all but the conditions of this season of trial and preparation ; rudimentary lessons, practisings and rehearsals for that other life yet to come. Great as is our destiny, great as is our calling, great as is our hope, yet, under God's order, everything takes its time. Everything moves by degrees—often by slow degrees—from the imperfect to the complete, from the seed to the fruit. We are only being made ready for that which is one day to be so great. Now is the only time of learning to know our ignorance, and by discovering our own mistakes, to correct them and do better. Now all these 'elements of the world,' as S. Paul says, these natural and customary circumstances of our few short years upon earth, are sent to us as our schoolmasters,—I perhaps might say our watchers and guardians, to chasten, mould, shape, and to harden us. This, then, is the thought for the New Year. We have all heard over and over again that this life is a place of probation where we are tried and made ready for the next. But let me ask you in all seriousness to think and consider that, though this is trite and familiar, it is real and true. This life is a place of preparation ; and that is in fact its real worth. That it is which gives it its true and serious dignity to creatures who know they are destined for another. What is such a life, as we know ours to be, compared with that boundless system in which it holds its place, unless, indeed, it is a necessary and most precious preparing-time, for those who are called to immortality, to be fitted for immortality ? Think what it is compared with the vastness of the eternity before us and behind us ; a mere point, a single tick of the clock in comparison with a man's lifetime, is far longer than all that lifetime is to those vast ages which have gone before it, without beginning, and which are to come, without end. Think of it as compared with those immense spaces of the universe which enclose us on all sides, and of which we see but a small portion, when we look up at the myriads of stars, growing fainter and fainter, as we gaze and remember that every one of them is a sun. Think, that when we look deeper and deeper into the endless blue, we are merely trying to look upward and onward towards distances which imagination itself can neither sound nor measure. What are we and our

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lives in the midst of such an overwhelming universe? What are we, shut in between the immense Before and the Hereafter that shall never run out? What are we, closed in and lost between, what Pascal tells us he shuddered to think of, those immense wastes of space which shut in and encompass unknown worlds? What are we before the Ancient of Days, to whose eternity all time is as nothing, to whose infinity the spaces of the sky that we behold are but the outskirts of His kingdom? Yet, there is an answer, and you may remember the saying of a great German thinker, that there were two things before which he was always lost in continual and increasing wonder, the starry heavens and moral law. That moral law in man which is his unique possession amidst all the creatures with which he lives and dies; the law of conscience, duty, and love in a poor frail creature that a breath of vapour may kill. This is the answer when the thought of the immensity of the things which exist without him crushes him into insignificance; the answer which in fact the Psalmist, anticipating the sage's reflection, gave many hundreds of years ago, 'I will consider the heavens, even the works of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained. What is man that Thou art mindful of him; or the son of man that Thou visitest him?' What indeed? But the Psalmist has already answered his own wondering exclamation. He whose name is excellent in all the world; He who has 'set His glory above the heavens,' 'yet out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings hath He ordained strength.'

That is, He has made weak creatures like ourselves to know, in spite of all that we do not know, the great laws of right and wrong. He has given us a soul to see, and a will to choose, and a heart to love the goodness, the holiness which is in Himself. He has given us to love the truth and to hate falsehood; to fight His battles; to maintain His cause; to stand against and conquer evil. He has ordained this strength in us that He might 'still the enemy and the avenger.' 'Babes and sucklings'—this was how men appeared to the Psalmist when he looked abroad on the sky, and then thought of men here. 'Children still at school in the world' is S. Paul's expression that raises us out of this figure, and the dark figure of man's life and condition is the consciousness and remembrance of the great end for which we have to make ourselves ready, and of the great work of preparation which He has counted us worthy. For this preparation this life was made; of this preparation the place in which we find ourselves living is the actual stage.

R. W. CHURCH,

Church Sermons by Eminent Clergymen, vol. i. p. 113.

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‘Made under the Law.’

When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law. GALATIANS iv. 3.

THE Incarnation is the revelation of the binding force of natural law to the necessities of which God Himself yields up His Son. It is the loud proclamation of the deference God pays to that nature which is His own creation. Where, indeed, can we learn more emphatically than from the Cross of Christ the validity, the sanctity of those natural conditions which God of His own will obeyed, even to the death of His Son, rather than break?

I. He passed under the law. He became a Son of the Covenant, a Jew of Jews, being already a child of Abraham. Two thousand years of continuous and recorded history laid hands upon Him by that act—two thousand years since first God had sealed His promise to man under the pledge of circumcision. All that history stands good still. Christ accepts it; God respects it. None of it shall be destroyed or set aside. The law is bound to be fulfilled, to be worked out; yea, to the very end. Only by complete and fearless submission to its claims can its due necessities be ever loosed.

And not only under the law; but He passed also under the Scripture. Here was the power of prophecy that went before Him. It accomplished its completest mission by lodging itself in Him. What those books recorded He must now fulfil. The experiences they noted and showed had authority over Him. They gave Him His direction; they marked down the path He must tread. He is made responsible for all that faithful sons, in the weary years behind Him, had, under the discipline of the Spirit, been led to suffer, feel, utter, hope, declare. He accepts the limitations set upon Him by their intuitions. He consents to travel by the road they cast up, passing from stone to stone there where they of old, in days of darkness and agony, laid them in the wilderness.

II. So ‘God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law.’ In how strange a contrast this Divine method of reform, of revolution stands to the declaration of the quest of the idealists in the days before the Christ. It is the very note of all the old failure to redeem the world by philosophy which is struck in the sad Platonic phrase, ‘Give me but the children—give me a clean canvas.’ If only facts were not facts; if only the past were not the past. Poor pitiful cry of the wounded soul; so pathetic and so vain. God indeed offers a new beginning; Christ indeed makes all things new; but it is you yourself, as you are, which He asks for. It is this that He would redeem and recover,—you, the very self in you, which is now sick,

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and wounded, and loaded, and broken. This is what He wants ; not some imaginary self dropped out of the skies, without a past, without a story. God cannot spare you the slow and painful work of remedy ; but He can and will give you His own force to endure it. Here is the one miracle, the only miracle you need. Deep within all He will lodge His Spirit ; back behind all He will implant Himself. There is your security ; there is your new start. In Christ, who is made yours, old things are become dead ; you are made new. Sure of that, you will not be afraid, whatever the year brings you. Sore and heavy the slow hours will often creep along ; burdensome and dreary the load you may yet have to carry far, but be of good heart, step out with courage, for within He will not fail you, who, circumcised the eighth day, asked for Himself no legion of angels, nor even, to relieve Himself, would turn stones into bread.

H. SCOTT HOLLAND,
On Behalf of Belief, p. 187.

Christ our Ideal

GALATIANS iv. 3, 5.

I. **C**ONSIDER what has happened since that coming in the Flesh, which we are thinking of to-day, in relation to the ideal of man, the ideal of what he should be, of his character, of his perfection : the ideal of man before Christ came to us, the ideal of man since we have known Him, and He has been with us. Man has never been able to live without his ideal. And the ideal of the natural man, of man before the great change of the gospel, could be a high and noble one. Great and wonderful, and sometimes overpowering, are these fragmentary forms of goodness when we meet with them in the old world—‘Light shining in darkness and the darkness comprehending it not.’ Why should we not acknowledge and reverence them, though they were so evanescent, though they failed to perpetuate themselves, though they were so imperfect, though they had no spring in them of recovery and self-correction ? These were for their time.

II. But God was pleased to be patient, with what S. Paul calls the times of this ignorance, till ‘the fulness of the time’ was come. We may look back on them with silent awe and leave them in His hands till He comes to judgment. But to us the times of ignorance are past. There had been an ideal of man in the world all the while of a very different kind. One family of mankind had preserved the great faith that man was the object of God’s care and love, and that he was fit to be the object of God’s care. Promise and legislation

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and history, the songs and complaints and raptures of psalmists, the terrible lessons and unearthly visions of prophets had kept up this faith. And at last God's time came, 'the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us.' The huge gap in man's ideal of his life was filled up; man was not an orphan, not knowing whence he came, or what was his destiny; he was not fatherless, a victim of the blind forces of nature, with no living love or care above him to which he might lift up his heart and know that he was answered. One had come to open his eyes to the realities of what he was made for, and amid which he lived; One who was like him and spoke his words and shared his lot.

III. Man has still to live his appointed days on earth. He must live them according to the conditions—physical, moral, social—which One greater than man has imposed upon Him. He must think of himself as taken out of the shows and appearances which each day brings with it, to be a partaker of what is permanent and for ever. He has a pattern to aim at which is not of this world, and that pattern is the life—if we may speak so with reverence—the character of Jesus Christ. He has a fellowship not of this world, and that fellowship is with the Father and the Son. He has a hope and a fear beyond anything conceivable here—the Judgment Seat of the Son of Man.

And on these things we are sometimes told to be silent. We stand before the world, which is not so much disposed as it once was to let us off, our profession of this great ideal of human life; and we are bid to realise it to the full, or to hold our peace. There the great truths are, for us to take or to leave; with us it rests whether the true answers shall be given or not. The real silencing answer is the lives of men, the lives of Christian believers. May God help us to remember that we have been made the sons of God, and to discern the import of these tremendous words: 'Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man.'

DEAN CHURCH,
Cathedral and University Sermons, p. 66.

The Incarnation.

GALATIANS iv. 4, 5.

WE may observe in the Christian calendar how the Church is evermore wont to dedicate not merely days but seasons to the devout contemplation of those great mysteries in the life of our Lord (such, for example, as the Incarnation or the Resurrection) upon

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which her very existence is founded. She has announcements of them beforehand, that her children may come to their celebration with duly prepared hearts ; she has echoes and reminiscences of them afterwards, that so the thoughts and feelings which they were meant specially to awaken should not too soon pass away ; that we may look back at them, even after we have left them behind us, with a fond and a frequent recollection.

I. Thus the Incarnation of our blessed Lord and Saviour pertains truly to all this present season, and therefore to this first Sunday after Christmas (which, as such, has indeed given place to the more solemn feast of the Circumcision), for the Incarnation is so great a truth, one awakening so many thoughts, which may be reverently regarded from so many sides, that a single day had been little to dedicate to the commemoration of its mysteries.

For to select one thought out of the multitude suggested by the meeting of heaven and earth in the person of that Babe who was laid as at this time in the manger at Bethlehem, there is one that in some degree is placed specially before us by these words, 'fulness of time,' with which the Apostle marks the preparations which there was according to the promise of God in the old world for the coming in of this great epoch in its history. In Him, in this Child, whose name was 'Wonderful,' all the righteous longings of that old world were fulfilled and gratified ; that which men had been feeling after and dreaming had actually come to pass as a substantial reality on this common earth of ours—common no longer, while such a glory from heaven had fallen upon it. Man had been dreaming of a meeting of God with man ; all heathen religions were full of this—of God's taking human shape, doing human acts, of men lifted up to rank with the immortal deities. And herein, no doubt, there were true feelings blindly at work ; dim prophecies in men's hearts of what should be—yea, of what must be, if man were ever to attain to his just end, to reach His ideal perfection, to unfold himself according to the true law of his inward being.

II. Reconciling the truth of God's distinctness from the creature, which it was committed to the Jew to assert, and God's union and fellowship with man, which the Greek felt must in some way be, but which he realised in a thousand unworthy forms, reconciling both appears the great Christian doctrine of the Incarnation of the only-begotten Son of God. God does appear under conditions of humanity, as the heathen had been yearning for, but not as he dreamed, taking a thousand shapes, and so causing all sense of the one absolute Being to be lost, whereat the Jew was so deeply and justly revolted ; not in a multitude of deified yet still unholy men, filling a profaned heaven with their passions and their crimes, but

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the only begotten of the Father once for all, once and for ever, assumes our human nature, takes to Himself perfect manhood, which He exalts and glorifies, through which He manifests the life of God, showing that Divine works may be wrought in it, that God can be perfectly pleased by the service which it renders; and in His own exaltation to the right hand of God, lifting up that nature to the same place for evermore. And thus He affirms not merely such a union to be possible, but in His own person realises it to the uttermost that so it may in its measure be realised in all whom He had made His brethren—the Son of God becoming also Son of man, that the sons of men might in their turn become the sons of God.

III. The title 'sons of God' teaches us much concerning the new spirit in which we should learn to regard God, our brothers, and ourselves. (1) Sons of God, how doth this name rebuke the coldness and distance which is often in our hearts towards Him, hearts that many times will be hearts of servants still offering the limited and distant service of constraint instead of the free and large obedience of love, of a love which asks for no limits, while it knows of no limits but its own inability to advance further. (2) If it be not an empty name but a truth, of a family of God upon earth, then each man we meet is indeed our brother, between whom and ourselves we may not suffer our selfishness and our pride to build up walls of separation and of distance. (3) And this title, sons of God, it again tells us if God be so near us, and we so near unto Him, that then there is no evil whatever which we may allow or tolerate in ourselves. So that the name teaches us much, but for our comfort it teaches us one thing more. While we know that He with whom we have to do is a God that deals not in empty titles or mocking names, it yields us assurance that He who hath given us to be sons, hath given us also all that is needful for maintaining our position as such; He who hath given the standing, hath with it given whatever is required for realising that standing. 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.' First, the relation as constituted, constituted in Christ Jesus, constituted by a free act of God's mercy in Him, and thus out of the relation which stands, not in the will of man but of God, that is, not on shifting sands but on an eternal Rock, flow all the gifts and graces, all the imparted powers of the world to come, which are needful for maintaining the same, for the bringing out all the largeness and fulness of the blessings which in it are contained.

R. C. TRENCH,
Westminster and other Sermons, p. 1.

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Abba, Father

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. GALATIANS iv. 6.

ABA, Father! In such terms, in the first fervour of their faith, did the members of the apostolic churches of Galatia address God. The words make on our minds a mixed impression of strangeness and familiarity. Abba is a Semitic word, foreign to our ears; Father points to a family tie common to mankind and sacred in character. The combination serves as an emblem of the twofold aspect of Christianity, as national in its origin and universal in its destination. Salvation is of the Jews, but formed for the world. Abba means father, and the question naturally suggests itself, Why two names in different tongues for the same thing? The most probable explanation is that through its use by our Lord the word Abba had become a kind of proper name for God, the Christian name for God, so that when worshippers in their prayers said, 'Abba, Father,' it was almost as if they had said, 'Oh God, our Father.' On this view, this dual expression is an indirect tribute to the service rendered by Christ to the world in giving currency, in the dialect of religion, to Father as a name for God. Christ has done so much more for the world than originating a new, felicitous, prophetic name for God, that this particular service is apt to be overlooked; but one notes with pleasure that S. Paul did not overlook it. Observe the words, 'the Spirit of His Son.' The spirit which directs, which elicits from Christians the exclamation, 'Father!' is identified with the spirit of Christ. This reveals Paul's acquaintance with the fact that Father was Christ's chosen name for God, and it also shows His sense of the importance of the fact. 'Take note,' he says in effect, 'of this new name. It is the watchword of a new era, ushering in new relations between God and man, bringing a happy change in the spirit of religion from servile fear to filial trust.' Like all great contributions to the enlightenment of the world, this one seems so very simple that any one might have rendered it. For the natural suggestion that the best, truest, most winsome name for God is Father might occur to any one. It did occur to men in the grey dawn of time. Our pagan ancestors worshipped *Deus Pater*, Heavenly Father; but Christ was the first to put the necessary emphasis on the name, to say 'Father, Father.'

I. *The Changed Idea of God.* Now what was our spiritual state before Christ came and taught men to call God Father but a state of darkness and captivity and exile? Those who have read largely the history of pre-Christian times know how true this is. God, a God afar off, high above the world, so distant that He could have nothing

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to do with it except through angelic intermediaries, so majestic and awful that men were afraid to pronounce His name, and spoke of Him and to Him by circumlocution ; a Divine taskmaster who imposed a heavy burden of legal obligation, which men bore in a spirit of slavish fear,—such was the pre-Christian state of even God's chosen people of Israel. To men who, like Paul, had thoroughly realised what this state of servitude signified in all its gloomy oppressiveness, what a relief to go to the school of Jesus, and there be taught after this manner to pray, 'Our Father, who art in heaven !' How much it meant for the disciplined ear ! God no longer afar off, but nigh ; God no longer a taskmaster, but a God of grace ; God no longer a rule-maker, but a source of inspiration, impulse, power ! Religion no longer an affair of task-work, performed in a spirit of fear, but a matter of glad self-surrender to the infinitely good ! I do not suppose there was any person living in Paul's time who understood the significance of this new name as he did ; but I think even the Galatian Christians felt it to a certain extent—felt it to be a blessed change in their religious dialect and a blessed change in their religious state. They came over from Paganism into Christianity, and they felt it was a great change, a new world. They changed many gods for one. They changed gods of uncertain, variable, capricious character for a God of fixed and worshipful character, wise, holy, and good. They parted with a religion of moral licence, but without an outlook for the future, and gained instead a religion of pardon, purity, good hope. Change made them happy. They could hardly have quite explained to others why, but their happiness found expression, and its deepest source was revealed in an ecstatic cry, which now and then escaped from their lips, 'Abba, Father !' When they cried, Abba, Father ! they were, as it were, speaking with tongues inarticulately, helplessly uttering thoughts they had not yet grasped. The best proof of this is that they had relapsed into legalism. The men that cried, Abba, Father ! went away back to Jewish ordinances. They had not had enough of Judaism. They had come into Christianity through Judaism, and they had felt that Judaism was very superior to Paganism, and they had not had enough of it ; and so, after the first fervours were over, and after the powerful personality of Paul was withdrawn, and men of another spirit came in to tempt them, they left the Gospel for the law, and the Father God of Jesus for the exacting Divinity of the synagogue. Paul was very vexed about this ; it was that that caused him to write this Epistle. Paul argued, expounded, and tried to show the Galatians the genius of their own faith. And the philosophy of sonship is worth studying.

II. *The Philosophy of Sonship.* (1) The nature of sonship. Paul's way of speaking about it is not quite the way of our Lord.

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Paul uses the word 'adoption,' and so he gives to sonship the appearance at least of an artificial and technical state compared with the presentation of the same subject by our Lord, who seems to rest God's Fatherhood on the essential identity of nature in God and man, in accordance with the doctrine of the first page of the Bible, that God made man in His own image. Now, while there is a difference, I do not think it should be exaggerated; and I think, perhaps, the theology of the schools has hardly done justice to the Apostle, for what he meant by the word translated 'adoption' is making sons in deed of those who were previously sons only in name. The heir, says he, while a child, differeth nothing from a servant. He is a son, but still he differeth nothing from a servant. He is a son, but not till the time appointed does he enter upon the privilege and glory of sonship. That is Paul's thought; and it is a very far-reaching one. It covers the whole religious history of the world. The Jew from the Exodus was God's son—'out of Israel have I called My son'—but he differed nothing from a servant, because he was under the legal ordinances of Zion. The Gentile also was a son, though in comparison with Israel he might seem to be a neglected son, cast out of the house, like Ishmael with his mother Hagar. But when Christ came, the sonship of the Gentile was acknowledged, and He was admitted to full heirship. And, finally, all men, however vicious and however godless, are sons, though till they arise and return to the Father's house from the distant land of prodigalism, they are the veriest slaves of evil dispositions and habits. So, you see, Paul's thought is a very deep and comprehensive one. At last sons indeed, those who, while sons always, differed nothing from servants.

(2) The ground of this sonship. Paul rests it on the redemptive agency of Christ. 'When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' Christ was made under the law—that is a fact unquestionable. For example, Christ was circumcised, a very significant fact for Paul and his opponents. The question between them was, What is the meaning of it? They said nothing could prove more conclusively the perpetual obligation of the law, and of circumcision in particular, than the fact that Jesus Christ was circumcised. Not at all, says Paul—quite the contrary; just because Christ was under law the law is abrogated. He stooped to conquer; He humbled Himself that we might be exalted; He gave the law its greatest triumph, and at the same time its death-blow. He was circumcised that circumcision might thenceforth become a meaningless, antiquated rite. Now, the *rationale* of this is difficult, and it is quite pardonable

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not to be able to grasp it; but it is well to know that Paul has read the religious significance of Christ's experience truly.

(3) *The Watchword of Sonship.* It is not merely a theological dogma, but it is a fact that the law of the moral world is this, that an old order of things does not pass away without demanding and obtaining full tribute from the heroes and prophets of the new time. The era of legalism does not meekly resign its power into the hands of the era of grace. It dies hard and it has its victim. Jesus, the bringer-in of the new era, must be the slave, so to speak, of the old era, not in spirit, but in law. But legal worship ends; and Gospel ages reign! The heir, heretofore no better than a servant, enters at last upon his inheritance. Liberty comes—liberty from the bondage of legalism. Herein lies the value of the adoption. It is precious because of the liberty it brings. Let me ask you to note that liberty is the watchword of the new era of grace! liberty not to do as we like, for that would be licence; but liberty from dead works to serve the living God in holy joy and in self-abandonment.

A. B. BRUCE,
Christian World Pulpit, vol. xliv. p. 131.

Servants and Sons.

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son: and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. **GALATIANS iv. 7.**

IT is very remarkable how the name and love and work of each Person of the ever-blessed Trinity are grouped, as it were, round this well-known sentence, and shed such a multitude of lights upon it, that, if our gaze is faithful, earnest, reverent, and attentive, we can hardly help drawing from it much of that comfort and warning which God meant it to convey.

I. First, we are to recollect the exceeding great love of Him who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, that He might make *us* His children, and heirs of eternal life. From what follows, we see clearly that God considered both Jews and Gentiles as having been the slaves of sin and death till He redeemed them. For though His Apostle tells us that it was those 'who were under the law' who needed and received this grace of enfranchisement, still those to whom he is writing were not Hebrews at all, and yet he immediately includes them, with all the rest, in the former condemnation and the present deliverance.

II. And then we hear another voice, not merely above us now, but with us, the voice of Him who came from on high to visit us, and through whose human life and death we receive this wonderful adoption. He is made under the law; for He has to redeem them

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which were bound for their transgression of the law. But we see at once that His love, His power, His redemption are far wider than the needs of the one representative people; for He is ‘born of a woman.’ The very words, as we hear them, remind us of our common nature, which hath but a short time and is full of misery, and we know at once that Christ hath made the whole world His kin. But why? Not merely to lower Himself, and so to teach us what we could never otherwise perfectly learn—the paramount duty and intense blessedness of humility—but also, and much more to exalt us, ‘by taking the manhood into God.’ The phrase, ‘adoption of sons,’ belongs to the New Testament alone, to teach us surely that it is only through the *Incarnate Son* that we can have such a place and such privileges here, such exceeding great and precious promises for the world to come. ‘O Lord, the only begotten Son Jesus Christ, say to us again and again, “Abide in Me, and I in you.”’

III. Has He not a spirit thus to speak to us, thus to remind us of our having been baptized into Him, thus to encourage us to continue in that holy fellowship? Is there not One, named in the same name with Him and with His Father in the administration of God’s baptism? Is not ‘the Spirit of God’ called also ‘the Spirit of the Lord’ and ‘the Spirit of Christ’? Yes; and therefore, when we are joined to Christ, we receive His Spirit, ‘the Spirit of adoption,’ which ‘beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.’

(a) Here, then, is our first practical lesson in the school of Jesus, which is, indeed, our home. *Being* regenerate, we need daily renewal.

(b) Next, and following this, there must be earnest prayer for that Holy Spirit who can and will renew us.

(c) And then, in that imparted strength, that undeserved sanctification of His, we must learn to do the will of our Father, ‘as obedient children.’ ‘Perfect love casteth out fear;’ and so we may go forward quietly, for underneath are the everlasting arms.

G. E. JELF,
Sermons for the People, p. 198.

III. OUTLINE ON THE GOSPEL.

GOD WITH US.

Emmanuel, God with us. S. MATTHEW i. 23.

CHRIST has many names in Holy Scripture, but never one without a design.

They indicate His character, office, mission, *the issues of His work*. Emmanuel of the last kind.

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Significant of the new relation between God and man wrought by the Incarnation.

All the tender associations of the season { Angels' Song.
Shepherds' Watch.
Mother and Babe.

All are pledges of a conciliated God.
Christmas tells of restored friendships even in this world.
The family circle—estrangements healed. Religious differences
Political animosities.

Goodwill exchanged. Cf. Truce of God mediæval.

I. HE IS UNCHANGING.

God with us to-day is God with us to the end.
It is the earnest of the inner life, which is the Divine life.
The Father is nearer to us, as we get nearer to the Great Emmanuel.
'If ye had known Me,' etc. (S. John xiv. 7.)
It bridges over the gulf between the finite and infinite.

II. GLORY OF THE INCARNATION.

As the guiding light of fire for the Israelites was always accompanied by the pillar of cloud, so the times of deepest humiliation were for Him times of greatest glory.

His death, that of a vile malefactor, moved heaven and earth to witness to His majesty. The sun hid his face. The earth gave up her dead.

His burial a defeat. Angels guarded His sepulchre.
His birth, humble and poor. Heaven celebrated the event.

III. THE FIRST-FRUITs.

Always—as He was, so are we, and ours.
God gives Christian saints into the care of the angels.
The departing soul is borne in their loving arms to the bosom of Paradise.

The Angels rejoice over Christ's Birth, because it bridges over the abyss between earth and heaven, and makes possible the joy there is among them 'over every sinner that repenteth.'

The Preacher's Book, First Series, No. 6.

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IV OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

The Vision of Reality.

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them: and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. ISAIAH XXXV. 1.



HE vision is strangely bright and beautiful. The prophet sees the dreary, parched, and barren wilderness break out like a garden of Eden, and, as in the fortieth chapter, the prophet gazes down the long centuries, and beyond the nearer march of ransomed Israel through the desert, beholds a grander deliverance and world-wide redemption, when all flesh shall see the salvation of God, so

seeing in his vision of the breaking forth of all nature into blossom and song, he is telling of things to be in the latter days, he is singing of glories that are in store for the Church of God.

I. All through the sacred pages, however dark and terrible may be some of their denunciations of wrath and pictures of coming judgment, there gleams forth, now in flashes of holy joy, now in dreams of exquisite beauty, in which all fair things of earth are brought together to build up a dim, distant image of glory too bright for mortal eye, splendid prophecies of coming regeneration, glad anticipations of the golden age, and we read and listen. It is as a far-off strain of sweet music stealing over the senses in a luxury of passive sweetness, or as the cloud pageantry of some gorgeous sunset which, as we gaze, fills the soul with a sadness born of the sense of distance and longing unreality. We have gazed on the vision; where shall we find the reality? Is all the beauty, and the light, and joy, kept back for heaven and the hereafter? Nay, it does not sound so. It is not heaven, but the desert, which shall blossom as the rose. I think if one trained in solitude to study God's Word, and kept in ignorance of the world's true state, were at last to go forth to see for himself how men live, he might be not a little staggered. He would probably expect to find the world a very beautiful and happy place, or, if not, he would at least expect to find the Church shining in bright contrast to the darkness around, a city at unity in itself, a haven of love, and peace, and holiness.

II. Even in the poorest place we may find a rose garden in the desert. Even among our darker regions there are spots where the light is growing, and brightening, and spreading, wherever the Church is working earnestly, lovingly, and wisely, there we see unfailingly a quick response and a thankful acceptance by many of her

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ministrations. Those whom God has blessed with fairer lots and sweeter surroundings, hold these gifts in trust for the sad and suffering, and if faithful to their trust, will let their own brightness brighten many a darker life. We cannot each do much towards making the desert into a garden of roses ; but we can each plant one rose in some desert life. We can carry to some sad, weary, desolate heart—ay, and even to some sin-stained, world-battered, heart-sore—a consciousness of true, generous, unselfish love, a vision of cleansing and purity, and restoration, a dream of things bright, and sweet, and beautiful, which shall not leave it all dark and dispairing.

BISHOP WALSHAM HOW,
Church of England Pulpit, vol. xvii. p. 28.

The Triumph of the Gospel.

ISAIAH XXXV. 1, 2.

ENCOURAGEMENT to expect revival arising from the prediction of the final triumph of Christianity.

I. The certainty of the universal diffusion of the Gospel.

(1.) It shall not be prevented by the magnitude of obstacles.

(2.) It shall be secured by general principles affecting the character and government of God, by the nature of the Gospel, which is fitted and intended to be a universal religion, by the express testimony of Scripture.

II. The results of the universal triumphs of the Gospel.

(1.) The happiness of the human race. Individual and relative.

(2.) The glory of God.

(3.) The ascription by the human race of glory to God.

G. BROOKS,

Five Hundred Outlines, p. 275.

The Comfort of Music.

Comfort ye, comfort ye My people. ISAIAH xl. 1.

I. **T**O comfort the people, as it is one of man's duties of life, so it is one of man's privileges, and all true art, and not least, surely, of the noble art of music. It is a man's part of the duty of life to comfort, to breathe hope, to put life into those who are depressed, to lift them out of themselves, to show them something, some cause, some all, some one person or friend, whose presence aids them out of their own sorrow. The sorrow which depresses also blinds and deafens. Within the narrow walls we at first see only ourselves and

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our family, we do not see for the moment other sorrows greater than ours. We do not hear the sweet sad music of humanity, which has, nevertheless, a ceaseless concert of its own. In such moments, or it may be long hours, with unwilling selfishness we need comfort, and who are then our best comforters? Not they who come down to our poor level, and, as it were, flatter the dignity of our grief, but they who have faith to touch a higher chord, by pointing us to Him of whom the human heart still puts up the pathetic question, 'Was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow?' only reminding us that we can minister to Him by comforting those whom He is pleased to call His brethren.

II. And this high gift of comforting, which is a great part of the duty of all, is one of the sacred privileges of art. Noble art does not please only, or teach only, or elevate only, it also comforts. It raises us not indeed above sorrow, but above selfish sorrow. We are reminded, not so much through the intellect as through the heart, of the truths so simply and touchingly expressed in Scripture, that the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren which are in the world. It is a most blessed truism, that music possesses beyond all other branches of art—beyond, indeed, every gift of God except the felt presence and outflow of a sympathising soul—the power to soothe, to touch, to encourage, in a word, to comfort. The great composers, and the great performers, and the great singers, have higher and more ennobling tones to listen to than even the plaudits of the most consummate of critics, or the affectionate gratitude of the kindliest and crowded assemblies. It is their privilege to hear, as few can hear it, that appeal which no gifted man or woman can ever hear unmoved, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.' Use your divine gift of summoning tears, of recalling memories, of revealing sympathies, of kindling hopes, of inspiring heroism, of bringing all heaven before the eyes of the most sorrowful,—ay, and even the most sin-stained; use this divine gift not only to please and thrill the prosperous, but to comfort all that mourn; to bring back to desolate hearts, however obscure, the presence and the consolations of Him who has said, through the mouth of His servant, 'The poor shall not alway be forgotten, the patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever.'

H. M. BUTLER,

Church of England Pulpit, vol. xxii. p. 229.

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God's Messengers the Prophets.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. ISAIAH xl. 3-5.

God has many messengers: and they have often lifted up their voice in the wilderness. Some speak with a voice of thunder to arouse a sleeping world. The doctrine of others distils as the dew, or the gently-falling manna. Some open new paths to the seekers after wisdom: to others it is given to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. It was in the wilderness that God revealed Himself to Abraham, to Hagar, to Jacob, as well as to Isaiah, to Elijah, to Ezekiel, and many a brave and exiled prophet of the new Dispensation. In the wilderness emphatically Jehovah spake to the chosen people whom He had brought out of Egypt. The solitudes of Sinai and of Paran were the presence-chamber of the King. He Himself went before them in the pillar of cloud and of fire; while the waters of the Red Sea, the smitten rock, and the mysterious manna, were His heralds and messengers.

The imagery of my text appears to be drawn from the journeyings of Israel to Canaan. That great event in their national history was constantly before the mind of Isaiah, and is presented in his writings with ever-varying illustration. Let us

I. Compare this prophecy with the history of the Exodus.

The prophecies of God's Word shine both before and behind. They not only illumine the darkness of futurity, but they reflect a radiance back on the page of history. So here. The children of Israel were brought into the wilderness of Arabia, that they might see the glory of the Lord, and receive their King. Moses and Aaron were God's messengers to them. In the desert the Gospel was preached to Israel (as S. Paul says) in types and ordinances, and especially by that great act of their redemption out of Egypt; for this was a perpetual type of the Redeemer's work of salvation, a fore-shadowing of the inspired song, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.'

But Israel needed to be prepared for the constant dwelling of God in their midst. In order that they might profit by their redemption, and personally enjoy the blessings of the Covenant, they must prove themselves a holy people unto the Lord. Hence their forty years' probation in the wilderness. Hence all the righteous statutes and judgments which God commanded them to observe. The law, both

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moral and ceremonial, was given to prove them. Its first office was to convince of sin, to make them feel the need of a mediator and an atonement. Its second office was to guide every penitent and loving soul into peace.

Thus the law was a schoolmaster to bring Israel to Christ. It humbled pride, and rectified vain notions. So mountains and valleys were levelled, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain. So in the ordinances given by the dispensation of angels might be heard the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way . . . for our God.'

II. Isaiah uses it as an illustration of his own ministry. He too, living now probably in the idolatrous reign of Manasseh, felt himself in a spiritual desert. 'Lord, who hath believed our report?' was his cry. 'All day long I have stretched out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.' Yet by faith he sees afar off, and the seer is himself transported into that bright future. Already foreseeing the seventy years' captivity of Judah, and then the joyful return of the exiles under the decree of Cyrus, Isaiah writes of these events as if himself living and acting among them; yea more, he pictures the dawn of the Gospel day as ushered in by that return from Babylon.

III. Such is the inspired vision of Isaiah. The transition is easy to the personal times of the Messiah, and of His herald John the Baptist: in which light let us now, thirdly, examine the text.

The words of Isaiah certainly point onwards to Gospel times; and John the Baptist distinctly announced himself as 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.' This preparation in a spiritual sense he accomplished by his personal ministry.

Like his great predecessor Elijah, the Baptist loved the wilderness. He mused amid the silent waste, and that solemn stillness seemed the prelude of the Voice of God. He looked around him on the winding ravines and the rugged mountains of the desert; and each suggested its counterpart in the moral desert of mankind. Those crooked, devious tracts, trodden down by the foot of wild beasts, were images to him of the dangerous paths in which sinful souls were walking. Those uncouth, stony roads, hardly discernible amidst the rugged features of the desert, pictured forth to his mind the many false religions along which the nations were groping their way and stumbling on the mountains of error. Yet beholding the advent of the world's Consoler, he bids those wilds rejoice; for the true Shekinah, the Glory of the Lord, was now at length to be revealed.

The homely and heart-searching appeals of the Baptist proved him to be the pioneer of the righteous King. And how well he prepared the way of the Lord Jesus Christ, we may learn from the manner in which all hearts were stirred by that cry, 'Repent ye, for the

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kingdom of heaven is at hand ; from the multitudes that were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins ; and from the numbers of John's disciples who became apostles of Jesus. Before this wilderness-preacher the mountains of Pharisaic pride were levelled, the valleys of Sadducean unbelief were filled up, the tortuous vices of the courtly Judean were corrected, and the rude ignorance of the Galilean smoothed and reformed.

Such was then a partial fulfilment of this prophecy in John the Baptist's ministry.

IV. But even in his day the words had a wider signification. Not only the land of Israel, but the Gentile world, even 'all flesh,' was then being prepared 'to see the salvation of God.' The former was accomplished by John's own preaching, of the latter he was only the herald. Providential agencies were even then at work preparing Christ's way among the Gentiles, and (as it were) constructing a road for the march of Christianity through the desolate regions of heathendom. The two most powerful agencies were Greek literature and Roman dominion.

(a.) At the time when our Saviour was born, the knowledge of the Greek language had spread more widely throughout Asia and Europe than has since been the case with any other tongue. What a preparation, then, was this for the spread of the Christian religion !

(b.) A second preparation designed by God's providence was the extent of Roman dominion.

V. This prophecy sheds a lustre on the world's future.

The Christ has indeed come to earth, but it was to suffer and to die. Once more in this wide desert 'The glory of the Lord shall be revealed,' and not 'one,' but 'all lands shall see it together.'

S. P. JOSE,

Oxford and Cambridge Journal, May 13, 1880.

Divine Compassion.

He shall feed His flock like a shepherd ; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.
ISAIAH xl. 11.

WHAT kind of God is He with whom we have to do ? This is a crucial question—lies very near to man's heart. The text is an answer to the question. Even when only partially revealing Himself, this is what He says of Himself.

I. How does Holy Scripture represent Him ? As exhibited to us in the Person of Christ. He is 'the Image of the invisible God' (2 Cor. iv. 4; Col. i. 15)—the 'express Image of His Person' (Heb. i. 3); i.e. Christ's acts—His sympathy—the yearnings of His

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human heart towards suffering humanity, set forth the character of God's tender love for man. In Christ only we can know what God is. To Christians alone the Divine Name is spelt out aright. S. John sums up by saying not simply that God loves, but that 'God is love' (1 S. John iv. 8, 16).

II. Compassion, tenderness, love, are the characteristics of God. How could they have been more shown than by the means He took to reconcile us to Himself (2 Cor. v. 18; Eph. ii. 16; Col. i. 20). Verily, Christ's wounds are the windows through which we see the measure of His love—'strong as death,' which 'many waters cannot quench' (Cant. viii. 6, 7). And in His, the Father's, for 'I and My Father are one' (S. John x. 30).

III. But love will not stand alone. It begets love. If we feel that a person has taken pains with us—is interested in us—watching for results—we shrink from disappointing him. So with God. Once feel that the Sacred Heart of Jesus yearns for you, with all the depth of its own infinite being, and you feel you can withhold nothing from Him.

But the gift of *heart* involves the gift of *will*. No mean sacrifice, if generously offered. The nearest likeness to Christ's Sacrifice. True love will think not how little it *need* give, but how much it *can* give to Him who 'so loved the world,' etc. (1 S. John iv. 11).

J. E. VAUX,
Sermon Notes, Third Series, p. 44.

The Everlasting God.

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. ISAIAH xi. 28.

IF wisdom is to be justified of her children, we cannot bear as her children not to try to justify her; and although we know that our God, the Initial Force, the Lawgiver, and the Law, the conscious Personality that harmonises and develops, upholding all things by the word of His power, is absolved infinitely from all such conditions as we, even when assured that man was made in His image, and that He, in the redemption and regeneration, has given us the power to look into the mind of Christ, can conceive as self-prescribed for Him; although we know that our God is, by the very nature of His self-existence, and by the very nature of our limited apprehension, outside of all such conditions as would limit Him by what we call attributes, we yet try, and are encouraged to persevere in trying to realise Omnipotence and All-goodness in every conceivable view of His working.

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To speak of Him as unconditioned is simply to put upon Him the widest condition that we can formulate, but still a condition; the Creator from the moment He begins to create, is in relation to that which He creates, and limited by that relation in certain aspects of His action; and if limited—voluntarily, of course, by the law which He is to Himself as to all His creatures—if limited, either by the inferior nature of the material which He creates, or by the freedom of the energies which, after creating them, He liberates for the work, out of which His sovereign law shall in an end eternal and infinite in its expansion work His sovereign will; it is not for us to prescribe terms or to calculate curves or waves of energy, and to refuse to recognise all that cannot be reduced to the terms and defined by the curves and waves of the experience that we have had grace and intellectual perspicacity to calculate. If extension and duration, space and time, are conditions of human thought without which we cannot think at all, of course we cannot think of God Himself except under those limits; but we know for all that, and we know by that very fact, that no conception of ours about Him can be adequate, or even, so far as truth depends on adequacy, true, save by His revelation of Himself to us.

I. And this being granted, we look first at the possibilities which lie in what He has not revealed, and, secondly, for the particulars which, in developing His message and expanding our power of receiving it, and in regulating our conduct under and in consequence of it, it has pleased Him to make known to us about Himself. We know in part, and in part we do not know, and, it may well be, cannot know, until the time of which He has taught us that then, even as we ourselves are known, we shall know. Now are we the sons of God, it doth not yet appear what we shall be: when He shall appear we shall be like Him, seeing Him as He is; and doing what we know of His will, we are growing into further knowledge; the door is open in heaven, and the light that shines from it is light to walk by and to draw nearer; as the path of the just to the perfect day. We may without presumption, certainly with nothing short of the most timid tentativeness, approach such mysteries as the travailing of creation, the gradual character of divine revelation, the delay of the consummation of the mediatorial work, the agency of external and previous influences on the will, the conduct and the responsibility of human beings.

All these four matters are of vivid and universal interest, ancient questions, older than Genesis, older than Socrates, older than Archimedes, older than Enoch; questions that no new theories can answer, problems that admit of constant new illustrations but lie in the very *incunabula* of human thought. Take them in order.

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(1) In that beginning of which the first verse of the Bible speaks, the Creator, Almighty and All good, called matter into being : the material world, in that conformation which science reveals to us, may be the result, not only of immensely long periods of energy, but of immensely varied methods of agency ; when it comes within our ken it is seen to be the result of operations into which pain and death largely enter, and in which, so far as we can see, they are still, with no traceable connexion with mankind, actively at work. In our contemplation of pain and death in human morals, we trace back both to the effect of sin, and sin to the depravation of the free will at the fall of man. What hinders us from conceiving that the existence and continuance of such measures of pain and death as are found anterior to the existence of man, and external to the operation of his moral agency, are the results of a freedom granted to pre-existent, or continued, perverted, and fallen agencies, about which we have no other knowledge ? Interminable cycles of the years measured by the revolutions of the earth, by the working of our system, and by the cosmic movement of the universe, might be required, but what obstacle does such a calculation place in the way of such a possibility with an Agent Infinite and Eternal ? There is the evil, there is the slowness of the working of law, but there is eternity before and behind. Who shall say to Him, What doest Thou ? There shall be no more pain: but it shall be when the former things are passed away.

(2) Then the slowness of revelation and its gradual character. We know that it is slow and that it is gradual ; and we can either account for that by the reason of law that works so, or by the absolute necessity, the terms and conditions of the situation being such that it should be so ; that is, we may either assume the law or justify the law. We have no more right to lay it down, as an axiom, that the Perfect God could or would reveal Himself entirely by one act of revelation, than that He would give men free will and always keep it in conformity with His own will. The revelation, to be a part of the victory, must be a revelation that would expand with the expansion of the receiving minds, giving them the choice between light and darkness and suffering, and enabling them to rejoice in the light rather than the darkness.

How about the twilight, and those who wandered in it to their fall, before the Daystar arose ? How about those who are sitting still in darkness ? Does not He care ? Are they not safer in His contemplation than in our perplexed hearts ? Will He, who died for them also, not satisfy His loving purpose in them also ? Eternity is very long, and the arms of His love and the energy of His Spirit are bounded by no such limits as our conceptions of them must needs be content with now.

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(3) But once more. We are told, and we know it in its measure to be true, that in the course of this world causes and consequences, multiplying and intensifying from generation to generation, do so mould the minds and thoughts of men as seriously to endanger the sense of personal responsibility, and practically to limit anything like free moral agency. We are told, in fact, that we are what our forefathers, our circumstances, our manners and customs, our teaching and religion make us, and scarcely anything more; and so if we are vicious it is something over which we have no control that makes us so; or, if we are virtuous it is something for which we have no credit; and if we are betwixt and between, well, we are as God, if there be a God, let circumstances, heredity, the accidents of life, and the stream of family history make us. It is He that hath made us, made us with the leaven of original sin, and visiting the miseries of the fathers upon the children. There is much of evil and sorrow in the midst of the lot of us all. What is the relation of All-goodness and Almighty to this?

There is much truth in the statement of facts. There are at least two considerations to modify it: first, the influence of circumstance and cause, and so on, is not unmixed; there is good as well as evil in the force that impels us; secondly, there is in every one of us, weak, wavering, as we may be, enough of freedom to determine our choice between the good and evil of the circumstance. Each man who has ever lived, and each action of his life, has contributed something; something that of course only the divine knowledge can discriminate or appreciate, but which is a contribution to the course of this world for good or for evil; and so we have to do the same. It may be that 'scarcely anything' of which I spoke, as small as the work of the coral insect in raising a reef in the southern seas; but it is a reality, and it is the reality about which our responsibility is involved. If it were not so, the initial circumstance of the world's history would go on accumulating momentum, with no modification of direction and with no friction. The very idea of the influence implies the contribution of each factor, of each link in the chain, of something that, if left out, would alter so far forth the character of the force. Life and death for each of us turns on that; is it to be done in the strength of God for the overcoming of evil with good, and assuring us our share in the victory? God help us. He has great purposes to serve, and blesses what little we can consciously do towards the victory of His Son.

When we look at the chart of human history, even for the six thousand years that the old chronology delimits for us, and see how great the expanse of ages, in which we know that there were human lives, making experience and influence, and yet whose experi-

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ence and influence had, so far as we know, nothing to do with the existing conditions of modern society, and see how all that consciously constitutes what we know as modern society falls into a comparatively insignificant section of the chart ; and if we take the map of the earth and stretch our compasses across the breadth and length of Christendom, and then look at the heavens, the work of His fingers, and the stars that measure His times and seasons for us, and beyond all that into eternity and infinity of energy ; surely, surely, we must feel that we cannot limit possibilities or impossibilities, the measure of Goodness and Almightiness, by the line and plummet of our own intelligence. What is man that Thou visitest him ? Yet Thou hast visited him, and made him lower than the angels to crown him with glory and power. And in Thine infinite purpose of good and of making all things work together for good, we believe, on Thine own word, who art the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the Initial Force and the All in All of the Consummation, Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

BISHOP STUBBS,
Cambridge Review, February 8, 1888.

V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

The Grace of Meditation.

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. LUKE ii. 19.

T is no part of the object of Holy Scripture to attract either wonder or adoration to the person of our Lord's Mother. Highly favoured, blessed among women, in being made the link of connection between the Deity and the humanity of Christ, she is yet never presented to us as herself more than human, or invested with anything of awe or of mystery beyond what is inseparable from the whole idea of the Incarnation of the blessed and eternal Word of God. When once her sacred office was accomplished, she stepped back into the rank of holy and pious women, and became only so far an object of attention to the Church below as she exhibited in spirit and conduct an example for their imitation. How needful was this reticence of God's Word concerning the Lord's Mother, how needful alike the absence of exaltation and the presence

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even of rebuke, the later history of the Church has well testified. If out of such materials the Church of a large part of Christendom has contrived, by a vague theory of development, to frame a system of divine honour for the human mother of the Saviour, what might not have been the prevalence and the exaggeration of such an error, how could even we ourselves have hoped to escape it, if the Word of God had so dwelt upon her position or her virtues as even to appear to give the weight of its authority to a doctrine so fanciful yet so attractive?

But we must not, from a fear of deifying the Lord's Mother, of exalting her above what is written and above what is true, fall into the opposite error of setting aside or treading underfoot her bright example.

We can scarcely fail to see that the text itself, taken from this day's Gospel, gives more than a mere feature of that character; that it presents to us that which was the main, the distinctive quality, of her of whom it speaks, that which made her so appropriate a type of the perfection of woman, and therefore so suitable a parent of Him who came to elevate and to enoble that half of our race, while He redeemed and renewed and saved the whole. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

Kept, and pondered: these are the two parts of the description. We can understand both of them.

I. There are many things from which we all suffer; many causes which contribute to our slowness and backwardness in the race of eternal life. There is the solicitation of things that are seen, ever drawing us aside both from faith and duty. There is the sin which doth so easily beset us; that particular form of evil, whatever it be, which happens from the constitution of our nature to be for us the most powerful and the most seductive. Of these things we have often to speak with you: from these things we derive our chief difficulties and our bitterest sorrows. But I know not whether even these hindrances and these distresses may not be traced up to a higher and more fundamental. We do not follow the example here set before us: we do not keep all these things, and we do not ponder them in our heart.

Of late we have been called to reflect upon those very things which were the subject of her meditation. We have been keeping the feast of the Nativity, recalling the scenes of our Saviour's first Advent, when He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. If these events were full of significance ever, they are so still. If Mary felt that to have any part in such transactions was an honour and a blessing beyond thought or word, that was because the transactions themselves were

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the most momentous that were ever wrought on earth, and involved consequences absolutely infinite in the eternity beyond.

II. This age, like every age, has its special dangers, for those who are, and for those who are not, in some sense Christians indeed. Few will deny that one peculiar risk of our age, for all who live in it, is the temptation to neglect reflection. Everything is in motion—there is no rest for any man but in the grave. How different from the still tranquil life of the villages or the hillsides of Palestine! How different even now the whirl and the turmoil of European excitement from the stagnant sameness and indolent apathy of the East! How opposite the spiritual dangers resulting from each! If the one is in peril of a dreamy inaction, the other runs an equal risk of a giddy and unreflecting dissipation. In the latter peril our lot lies: against it our chief struggle must direct itself. We are in danger of hearing and reading and doing many things, and of thinking and reflecting and judging little. We are in danger of listening to many sermons, and of joining in many services, without carrying away with us the lessons or the fruits of any.

III. Let us cultivate the peculiar grace which shone in the Lord's Mother. If we read little, let us keep it well: if we read much, let it be because we have time to ponder. Haste in divine things is ever a sign of heartlessness: if our time for thought is scanty, let us use it the more calmly and the more thoughtfully. One moment so spent is worth hours even of sacred reading without it. One moment so spent—with the windows of the heart set fully open towards the heavenly temple, so that the light and the air and the warmth of the very city of God may reach it in its inmost corners and recesses—is so full of hope, so full of promise, yea, so full of blessing, that it makes a man say, as he retires from it, Behold, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!

C. J. VAUGHAN,
Words from the Gospel, p. 172.

The Birth of Christ.

And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel: and for a sign which shall be spoken against (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also); that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. LUKE ii. 34, 35.

THEY cannot have read this history in the light of their own hearts who cast about seeking for the edicts and decrees under the compulsion of which Mary accompanied Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem. They surely look in the wrong direction who search

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among state papers for the arbitrary edicts and the fiscal regulations which compelled Mary at that particular time to leave the sheltered home and enter on such a journey. Had the perplexed commentators placed themselves in Mary's position, had they pondered all that must have been in Mary's heart, they would soon have found out the true reason for this perilous step of hers. Their own wives and mothers could have told them why Mary encountered that long journey and could not be persuaded to remain behind her husband.

Nazareth in those days was no home for Mary in Joseph's absence. Since the day he came for her to Hebron, he had been a father and a mother and a husband, too, to her ; never had a woman such honour and care and love from a man as Mary had from Joseph ; and no doubt all that combined with her other circumstances to make it impossible for Mary that she should at such a season be parted from her husband. Joseph was Mary's home and shelter and only comfort ; her life seemed sometimes to hang upon his presence. Yes, she will arise and go with him unto Bethlehem ; for she said, If it should be with me as it was with Rachel whom Jacob loved, if it should be with me as it was with the mother of Benjamin, then I could die near thee at Bethlehem as Rachel died near Jacob, and I could die in peace if I left my child in thy just and loving hands. And Mary said, 'Let us arise and go together even unto Bethlehem.'

'Fear not,' said the angel of the Lord to the trembling shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem ; for when the glory of the Lord shone round about them, the shepherds were sore afraid.

The near neighbourhood of that holy Child, and the heavenly light that accompanied His advent, suddenly revealed the thoughts that were hidden in the shepherds' hearts. It is a remarkable tribute that men's hearts everywhere pay to the holiness and justice of God, and it is an equally involuntary witness to the sinfulness and guilt and unpreparedness of their own souls, that, at the approach of anything unusual, at the remote approach of anything supernatural, at the very thought of any personal message coming to them from God, their hearts immediately begin to quake with terror.

The fearful shepherds thought something awful was about immediately to happen—

‘ The shepherds on the lawn,
Or e'er the point of dawn,
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row.

Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.’

Yes ; the poet of ‘Paradise Lost’ is surely right. For had the
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Bethlehem shepherds been chanting to themselves that shepherd's song which a forerunner of theirs had composed for midnight on these very plains ; had they been making this their song in the night season—

‘ For Thou art with me ; and Thy rod
And staff me comfort still ; ’

had their sinful and silly hearts been thus occupied when the heavenly gate flew open, I feel sure they would have needed less reassurance than the angel of the host had to administer to them. As it was, the thoughts of their hearts were suddenly revealed, to their confusion and consternation.

II. How many more in the house of Israel rose and fell before this terrible Child during the next forty days, and how many hearts around Him had their thoughts revealed, holy Scripture does not take time to tell. But as soon as His mother is permitted to take Him abroad—as soon as, in fulfilment of all Mosaic righteousness, she takes Him into the Temple, then we see Him at His heart-searching and thought-revealing work. And the first heart in Jerusalem the Divine Child lays open is happily one that has often been laid open by its owner, of his own accord, to the eye of God. For Simeon was a just and devout man, waiting for the Consolation of Israel. All who knew Simeon knew of his worth, piety, and integrity. But no one of all who knew him best knew half the ‘ thoughts of his heart ’ that were wholly revealed to Joseph and Mary over their Babe that purification day. No one had ever guessed that the old man who lived before them so obediently and so blamelessly was all the time detained among them so reluctantly. No fellow-worshipper even who came up conversing with aged Simeon to the house of God ever penetrated to those prophetic and prehistoric hopes and longings that filled his devout and ardent heart. All his devoutness was sometimes needed to reconcile him to the almost insupportable bondage of his life in the enslaved and impenitent Jerusalem of that day. God, in pity and in grace, had at last set a term to the earthly servitude of aged Simeon ; and it was a glorious term ! For it had been revealed to him by the Holy Ghost that he would not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ. And so deep and inappeasable was the saint's strait to depart that he could scarcely take time to look on the Child in any other light than as a sign of his own emancipation and release. Simeon felt that little hand that lay hidden in His bosom as if it were fast loosening the silver cord ; and to assist the work he revealed the thoughts of his heart in a prayer that made Joseph and Mary marvel : ‘ Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, since mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.’ ‘ Remember Thy promise,’ said Simeon to his heavenly Master,

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‘remember Thy gracious promise, and release Thy servant. Let me loose now from this too long life! I have seen what I was kept here waiting for. I have seen Thy salvation. Let me taste it in my own redemption. Simeon speaks as if he were less of a living man than a kind of Lazarus; alive, indeed, but still bound hand and foot with grave-clothes. ‘Lord, loose me,’ he prays: ‘let me depart.’ In his long-suppressed but now overwhelming impatience he almost anticipates the Apostle’s very words: ‘Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ Simeon’s long-tottering interest in this life fairly gave way and fell, never to be set up again, as he felt in his old arms the Child that had for so long been so much to him, and who would, he knew, be so much to many in the time to come. In his early days he had hoped and prayed that Messiah might come before he was too old to do any work in His kingdom; and since it had pleased God to withhold the salvation of Israel till Simeon was an old man, he rejoiced in it having come at last; but as it was clearly the will of God that younger men should work with the Messiah, Simeon felt his day was done. ‘Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace. . . .’

III. Just as Simeon was uttering these things there came into the Temple one who was seldom out of it. Anna was an aged widow of eighty-four years, but she somehow found strength to be continually in the Temple. She was alone in the world, and she had almost taken up her home in the house of God. She had no home duties, so that she was able to give herself entirely up to religious exercises. Anna would often say to herself, as she climbed the hill of Zion: ‘How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts: a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand.’ To most women of her years, Anna’s active life would have been impossible! but the prophetess actually seemed to have her youth renewed the older she grew. Simeon and Anna were no doubt a puzzle to many, for while many were absent from the house of prayer who might and ought to have been there, these two old people were always present. And what a reward they received that day for their unprecedent and unparalleled devotion to the house of God! For when the Divine Child, of whom every stone in that Temple spake—when the Lord of the Temple suddenly came to His Temple, Simeon and Anna, as a matter of course, were there to welcome Him. Simeon, it is true, had come up that day by special revelation: whereas Anna needed no such token: she was there according to her custom. And of their two leadings Anna’s was surely by far the best. Holy affections and deep-seated habits are far better and safer guides than angelic intimation. Devout as Simeon was, and full of expectation as he had long been, yet he had to receive a special summons, else he had missed

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the Messiah that day. But Anna could not miss Him. He could not elude her. Had He come like a thief at first as He will come at last, He would have found Anna watching. Still by special invitation and by habitual custom and inclination *they were both there*. There were many others in Jerusalem besides Simeon and Anna who looked for redemption, but Simeon and Anna were the only two who were found in the Temple at the fulness of time. Just as there are many good Christian people in this congregation whose other duties will not allow them—men and women who look for redemption and need it: yet whose circumstances, as we see, entirely forbid their attendance at all or at many of the ordinary means of grace.

Anna had a large circle of such acquaintance in Jerusalem—devout women who could not be always in the Temple as she was; and no sooner was that memorable morning service over than she hastened to tell them what had that day happened. Some other men, it may be, were that morning visited by the same impulses that moved Simeon, but other impulses crossed it and conquered it, and they remained at home. And many women, old and young, wives and widows, said somewhat bitterly to Anna that they too would have been in the Temple had they known what was to happen: they would have set aside any duty for a glimpse and an embrace of the Messianic Child. But so it was: He had come: and those who were there saw Him. He had come and He had gone: and many who would have given all they possessed just to see His face will be dead and buried before He comes back again.

I used often to wonder what that Messianic Scripture meant—‘Beware of Him.’ Novice that I was, I had sometimes been stumbled that it should have been spoken by any true prophet of the coming Christ, the Saviour of sinners. Beware of Him! But I see to-day as I never saw before in the light of this annunciation, how well it was that Israel was warned to beware of his Messiah. I see now how much cause the women of Bethlehem had to beware of Mary and her unborn Child. And how well would it have been for the shepherds to have set a watch over themselves as the darkness fell, saying, with an ancestor of theirs: ‘Thou shalt visit me in the night, and shalt find nothing.’ Also, I cannot again forget how much depended on Simeon attending to every impulse that tended toward the Temple of God. As also how well Anna was advised in devoting her long widowhood to the service of the sanctuary.

Trust your souls to Jesus Christ as much as you feel you need. Love Him and commune with Him as much as ever you like. But beware of Him all the time: beware of Him! You must not play fast and loose with the Angel of the covenant. You may very easily take too much liberty with Him. You must not always take Him

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and His business last. You must not presume that after all your other clients are attended to, He will still be found sitting idly in your side-room. I tell you: beware of Him! For He will come to you also in most unlikely shapes. He will appear at most unheard-of and inconvenient hours. And He will sometimes be found in the most extraordinary and impossible places. Beware of Him; or else you will sometimes shut Him up in your prisons, and turn Him off your doorstep, and pass Him by homeless, and hungry, and naked on your wintry streets. ‘Behold,’ said Simeon, as he held that dangerous Child in his arms—‘Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’

A. WHYTE,

British Weekly Pulpit, vol. i. p. 217.

The Law of Christ.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, and rejoice the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light unto the eyes.
PSALM xix. 7, 8.

THESE words, from a Christmas morning Psalm, may seem, at first sight, to have little connection with Christmas; but they fitly represent one aspect of our Lord's coming which falls in with the special character under which He appears in the first of the four Gospels, the Gospel according to S. Matthew. He came not only as our Saviour, but as our Lawgiver; or rather, as the words of the text well express it, as our Saviour and our Lawgiver both in one. The law of the Lord Jesus Christ is not only ‘a pure and perfect law,’ but it ‘converts the soul;’ the statutes which He has given are not only ‘right,’ but they ‘rejoice the heart.’ Let us see how this union was effected, and what this law was.

I. And now what was the precise meaning of the doctrine put forth in the Sermon on the Mount, with a sanction so high, on an occasion so solemn? Christ tells us wherein true happiness, true blessedness consists. There are, doubtless, many kinds of blessedness, of happiness in the world, which He would graciously allow, but which are not here distinctly mentioned. Blessed are they who in the circle of a happy home will this night meet round a Christmas hearth, in innocent and playful mirth. Blessed too are they, who have done or are doing deeds of beneficence or instruction,—active and happy in the consciousness of power well used, of duty well performed, of knowledge spread by their means to minds which answer to their minds, and hearts which answer to their hearts. Blessed again are they who, from time to time feel, with a sudden glow of religious

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emotion, a special assurance of God's love, a child-like reliance on His mercy. And blessed are they of another class, who delight to feel or to trace His presence in ancient and sacred ordinances, in the ordinance, above all, of that Holy Sacrament, of which so many this day partake. All these, and many more, in their several ways may truly be called happy—may truly be blessed by Him who is rich in all spiritual blessings, and whose gifts of grace are manifold.

But yet these are not the highest states of blessedness, or rather, they are blessed only as they tend to produce and increase within us that constant, unbroken, holiest state of all, which on this occasion our Lord pronounced emphatically 'blessed.'

II. But our Lord's words are not only the law, but the Gospel of the New Dispensation. They not only guide us, but they console, strengthen, cheer us. They are not only 'perfect and right,' but they 'convert the soul,' they 'rejoice the heart,' they 'give light to the eyes,' they 'give wisdom unto the simple.' To ourselves, they are a Gospel, 'a glad message,' because they tells us that this highest state of happiness is within our reach, at any rate in a sense in which no other happiness is within our reach. Of all conditions of life none is more miserable than that of those who are always on the watch for some piece of good fortune, in which they think that their happiness is involved, but which depends on accident or death, or the will or caprice of some other person. This is not the case with the blessedness of which Christ speaks. The kingdom of God, the blessedness of the kingdom, is not, 'lo here! or lo there!' it is 'within us.' We carry it about with us; it is to be found, with God's grace, everywhere. If there be any gifts whatever, which we may hope God will bestow, in answer to our prayers, to our sincere and humble seeking, they are these. Wealth may bring cares, knowledge may puff up, friends may fall away, power may become a heavy burden, but meekness, truth, and love do indeed 'rejoice the heart,' and 'give light to the eyes' of the simplest and of the greatest. No pilgrimage to distant lands, no reading of hundreds of books, is needed. This happiness is independent of everything, except God and Christ, and our own souls.

A. P. STANLEY,
Canterbury Sermons, p. 30.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. S. LUKE ii. 40.

GESUS as a Child.

(1.) He was a Child dedicated to God. (2.) A sinless Child.
(3.) A poor Child. (4.) An inquiring Child. (5.) An obedient Child. (6.) A persecuted Child.

G. BROOKS,

Five Hundred Outlines, p. 72.

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The Infant Saviour.

LUKE ii. 8-11.

THE source and beginning of all our rejoicing at this season is the infant Saviour wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. And why?

I. Because, in the first place, He is the pledge of God's forgiveness and of God's love towards man. We were before at enmity with God. We lay under a curse. The sentence of death had been passed on all our race. Behold the beginning of the undoing of the curse, the dawn of life and of light to a dark and benighted world. All the saving mysteries of grace were contained in Christ's Incarnation—somewhat as a forest may be said to be contained in an acorn, and hence first it is that Christmas is the season of our greatest joy.

II. Immediately out of this flows our gratitude as a Church. What had we been in this far land but for the substance of the angels' message to the shepherds?

III. And next, as individuals, we find here our personal grounds of gratitude and rejoicing; for Christ's coming into the world it was which hallowed every relationship, and blessed every age, and every state. The unmarried find in Him their pattern. The home at Nazareth is the ideal for evermore of a Christian household.

IV. Then lastly, consider how entirely from the coming of Christ in the Flesh, it comes to pass that the mourner learns to dry his tears. This privilege of Christian faith and hope was unknown to the heathen. But now the Day-star arose in the darkest season of bereavement, and as on summer nights there is a token of the morning, almost before the hour of sunset has quite passed away.

J. W. BURGON,
Ninety-one Short Sermons, No. xi

VI. ILLUSTRATIONS.

A Christian Child.

MISS FLETCHER tells the story of the death of a dear little child called Naglie, who died in Jerusalem not

ISAIAH xl. 11. long before her own death: 'I heard the touching account of her death from her mother, a young Christian, who had learned to love Jesus in Miss Arnott's School at Jaffa. Naglie was only two years and a half old when she died, but she was a strange child. She and her brother loved each other like two doves. Often she said,

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'I do not want to stay here ; I want to go to my dear Jesus.' On Sunday she went to church, but did not seem well. She came home and lay in her little bed, with eyes fixed, but they were looking at Jesus. Once or twice she said, 'I want to lie in my cold bed,' meaning the grave. She asked her father to sing to her. Then she said, 'It is Jesus, father, my dear Jesus, who has come to take me.' She looked up ; she saw what we saw not, and smiling said, 'There, He is at the foot of my bed ; He calls me to come.' Then all was over. She was but six hours ill. Naglie ever loved the pictures best at school which showed the dear Jesus. One day when her mother put flowers in her hair, she said, 'Mother, Jesus had thorns on His head, and not flowers.'

Carrying the Lambs. IN a Chinese Christian family at Amoy, a little boy, the youngest of three children, on asking his father

ISAIAH xl. 11. to allow him to be baptized, was told that he was too young ; that he might fall back if he made a profession when he was only a little boy. To this he made the touching reply, 'Jesus has promised to carry the lambs in His arms. I am only a little boy ; it will be easier for Jesus to carry me.' This logic of the heart was too much for the father. He took him with him, and the dear child was ere long baptized. The whole family, of which this child is the youngest member—the father, mother, and three sons—are all members of the Mission Church at Amoy.

The Glory of God's House. JEAN PAUL RICHTER says, God called up from dreams a man into the vestibule of heaven, saying, 'Come

ISAIAH xl. 26. thou hither, and see the glory of My house.' And to the servants that stood around His throne He said, 'Take him and undress him from his robes of flesh ; cleanse his vision, and put a new breath into his nostrils ; arm him with wings for flight, only touch not with any change his human heart—the heart that weeps and trembles.' It was done, and with a mighty angel for his guide, the man stood ready for his infinite voyage : and from the terraces of heaven, without sound or farewell, they wheeled away into endless space. Then came eternities of twilight that revealed but were not revealed. To the right hand and to the left, toward mighty constellations, depth was swallowed up in height insurmountable, height was swallowed up in depth unfathomable. Suddenly, as thus they rode from infinite to infinite ; suddenly as they tilted over abysmal worlds, a mighty cry arose—that systems more mysterious, worlds more billowy, other heights and other depths were nearing at hand. Then the man sighed, stopped, shuddered and wept. His overladen heart uttered itself in tears ; and he said, 'Angel, I will go no further. For the

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spirit of man aches under this infinity. Insufferable is the glory of God's house. Let me lie down in the grave, that I may find rest from the persecutions of the infinite ; for end I see there is none.' And from all the listening stars that shone around issued one choral chant, 'Even so it is : Angel, thou knowest that it is : end there is none that ever yet we heard of.' The Angel demanded : ' And is this the sorrow that kills you ? ' But his voice answered that he might answer himself. Then the Angel threw up his glorious hands to the heaven of heavens, saying, 'End is there none to the universe of God. Lo ! also there is no beginning.'

Second Sunday after Christmas

EPISTLE	GAL. IV. 1-7. ¹
GOSPEL	S. MATT. I. 18-25. ¹
FIRST MORNING LESSON . .	ISAIAH XLIII.
FIRST EVENING LESSON . .	ISAIAH XLIII. OR XLIV.
SECOND LESSONS	ORDINARY.

OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS.

ISAIAH xliii. 25.

I.



HE nature of the blessing. Forgiveness of sin.

(1.) There is remission. Full and immediate. (2.) There is reconciliation. God forgets nothing, yet treats the pardoned as if they had never sinned.

II. The Author of the blessing.

(1.) The only Being who has a right to bestow it. He is the moral Governor of the universe against whom sin is committed. (2.) The only Being who has power to bestow it. Only His Omnipotence can arrest all the consequences of disobedience against Himself. (3.) The only Being who has devised and executed a plan for bestowing it.

III. The ground on which the Author of the blessing bestows it.

(1.) It is not on the ground of anything in them on whom He bestows it: their good works, their resolutions, their prayers. (2.) It is on the ground of something in Himself: of His love—love to the sinner, combined with hatred of the sin.

G. BROOKS,

Five Hundred Outlines, p. 95.

¹ Same as for First Sunday after Christmas.

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Biography in Three Words.

Jacob, my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. ISAIAH xliv. 1-2.

HAVE you never wondered why the people of God should be called by the name of the third of the ancient patriarchs in preference to the first two? We often, indeed, find them called the seed of Abraham, and we should easily understand what was meant if we read of the children of Isaac; but, as far as I remember, they are nowhere called simply Abraham or Isaac, whereas it is perfectly common to find them called, as in our text, Jacob or Israel, the name of the third patriarch being directly transferred to his descendants. Not only so: this usage has passed over into the New Testament, and we still sometimes call the whole body of living Christians the Israel of God. This is a somewhat surprising circumstance; for of the three patriarchs the third is certainly not the favourite. You sometimes hear very severe things said about Jacob, and in his history there is too much justification for them. Abraham was the friend of God, and all generations look back to him with reverence. Isaac's name, too, has a halo round it which Jacob's does not possess. Why, then, is it that the name of the third patriarch is attached to God's people, as if he were more directly their progenitor than the other two?

Is it because they are liker him than they are to Abraham or Isaac? Is the average Christian an imperfect, stumbling mortal, a compound of obvious vices and struggling virtues, as Jacob was? It would be harsh to say so. But we may come nearer the mark if we put this suggestion in a different form. Jacob was the progressive character among the patriarchs. His beginnings were ignoble, and the vices of his nature long clave to him; yet by degrees he surmounted them: he lived down the evil which was in him; and his end was that of one who, after many defeats, had at last obtained the victory. Abraham is a much grander figure than Jacob, but he has far less history. He may almost be said to be perfect from the first. If in him there was a slow development from small beginnings we have no record of it. Isaac, again, was, as far as the records inform us, a back-going rather than a progressive character. The opening scenes of his history are beautiful and noble; but his character lacked backbone, and we see him sinking into physical grossness and moral flaccidity. Jacob's life, on the contrary, in spite of great defects to begin with and many faults by the way, was a developing and ascending one. This is shown by the names

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he bore: he was first Jacob and then Israel. And it may be to recommend such a life of progress that his names are given to God's people. Let us from this point of view study the three names given them in the text—Jacob, Israel, Jesurun.

I. Jacob. This was the name of the natural man. After he had received his new name, the very mention of the old one must have reminded him of the evil time when he was an unbrotherly brother and an unfilial son. It is well sometimes to go back to what we then were, because the old habits may still spring up and trouble us: though we may now have received a new name, the old Jacob is in us still. Above all we ought to go back on that old time, because it helps to magnify the grace which brought us out of it: our forgiven sins are to us the measure of redeeming love.

II. Israel. The patriarch received a new name because he had become a new man. God does not trifle with such things. A change of name among us may be a mere freak of caprice; but, when God deliberately changed a man's name, it was an outward monument of an inward change. If it did not mean that the natural man, which the name Jacob designated, was entirely exterminated, it meant that it was so far overcome that the complexion of the life would henceforth be different. The reign of selfishness and worldliness was over, and a new spirit had entered in and taken possession. If we ask how this came about, it may have been a slower and more complex process than we have any record of; for what appears a sudden spiritual change is often only the culmination of movements going on for a long time before. In the moment when we are defeated, when our will is broken, when we are emptied of self and made willing to be nothing, then it is that we are crowned with victory. God pours His strength into us, lifts us up and acknowledges us as princes who have power with Himself. It is through such experiences that men and women enter into the secret of the Lord, become mighty in prayer, are endowed with spiritual power, and, if they do not receive new names on earth, yet obtain a stamp and a signature of character leaving no doubt that they have new names in heaven.

III. Jesurun. This name is added in our text to Jacob and Israel as a third name for the people of God. There is no evidence that it belonged to the third patriarch, though it may have done so. But there can be little doubt that, standing where it does, alongside of the other two, it was meant, like them, for a symbol of character. What particular phase or phases of character, however, it stands for is not so clear. The word occurs only in this chapter and in two chapters of Deuteronomy, and scholars are not agreed as to what it means. The root from which it appears to be derived means straight

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or upright, and this is its most probable meaning. We cannot, at all events, be wrong in speaking of straightness or uprightness as a requisite development of the character of the people of God ; and the probability is, that this is what is demanded when God calls them by the name of Jesurun.

This was precisely the development of character which the third patriarch needed, after he had received the new name of Israel. The majority of men are, I suppose, more keenly alive to their relationships to their fellow-men, and the obligations which these imply, than to their relationship with God ; and you will find many men who have developed a keen sense of honour in their dealings with their fellow-creatures who have almost no sense of their obligations to God. They are manly and upright ; you can depend on their word ; they will do, as opportunity occurs, a generous thing, and you can depend on them never doing a mean thing. Yet towards God they are totally undeveloped ; they do not thank Him for His mercies : they may even be profane in their language, and reckless in the pursuit of their besetting sins. But there are others in whom precisely the reverse has taken place. They are developed on the Godward side : they have felt their sins and repented of them ; they have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the Gospel ; they love the Saviour who has redeemed them, and hold daily communion with God ; they love the house of God, the Word of God, the day of God, and the people of God ; but they are undeveloped on the human side. They are censorious, and nobody likes them. You hear it whispered that in the market-place they do not bear a high character, and people do not care to do business with them. Or they are stingy in money-matters, and their employees or domestic servants complain of their meanness and cheeseparing.

We may be so sure of being God's elect, and of knowing His mind and will, that we undervalue our fellow-men and despise their opinions. We may be so zealous for God that we forget to be charitable to men.

Our text is a message of hope. It speaks of the possibilities of spiritual transformation and development. He who is a Jacob may be changed into an Israel ; and the most morally deformed constitution can be straightened out into uprightness. Live near to Him who combined absolute loyalty to His Father with boundless regard for His fellow-creatures ; He will sweeten the bitter fountain of your nature, and help you to observe the second table of the law as comprehensively as you are trying to fulfil the first.

J. STALKER.

Christian World Pulpit, vol. xxxviii. p. 253.

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Sin and Mercy.

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.
ISAIAH xliv. 22.

THREE are two thoughts in the text ; there is the thought of sin, and there is the thought of mercy.

I. There is, first, the thought of sin. ‘I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.’ The individuals to whom these words were originally addressed were guilty of crimes of great enormity and aggravation, crimes that had gathered themselves up until they were black and dense as a thick cloud. In the beginning of his prophecy the prophet paints their turpitude in very graphic and in very awful colours. He brings them, you remember, into very degrading comparison with the beasts of the field—‘the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib ; but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider.’ He represents them as burdened with iniquity, crouching down under the inexorable tyranny of evil—‘ah ! sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity.’ He tells them that this transgression has been perpetuated from the father to the child—‘a seed of evil-doers.’ Sin is everywhere ! Broad and deep, the wide world over, you may trace the fire-written syllables—‘As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, in that all have sinned.’ Upon the fairest, loveliest, and most blameless specimen of natural morality, Christ looks and says : ‘I know that you have not the love of God within you ; and it is just because of this one fact that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world be counted guilty before God.’

II. There is mercy. ‘I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.’

It might seem strange, it does seem strange that after this declaration of apostasy and of impenitence the prophet should not have gone away after pronouncing sentence of doom. We might have supposed that his very heaviest thunders would have been launched out against the transgressors, that when he spoke of sin as a cloud he would have gone away without leaving any hope of mercy. Is not God a just God ? Is He not angry with the wicked every day ? Are not His perfections united to oppose sin wherever it is found ? Do not sins of enormity and of aggravation expose to a terrible punishment ? And yet, when the voice does speak it is not the voice of vengeance but of mercy. The whirlwind passes over us, but the Lord is not in the whirlwind ; the earthquake comes, but the Lord is not in the earthquake ; the fire burns fiercely, but the Lord is not in the fire ; and

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after the whirlwind has spent its force, and after the rocky earth is still, and after the fire has ceased to burn, there whispers the still small voice, and as we listen we hear it as it speaks, 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.'

The everlasting Son of the everlasting Father became the weary babe in the manger at Bethlehem, became the homeless traveller along the journey of life, became the saddened victim in the Garden of Gethsemane, became the spotless Sacrifice upon the accursed tree; and the declarations of Scripture which announce that by that sacrifice salvation has been purchased, are both explicit and numerous. It is on the cross of Christ that the law is magnified, and the bargain is sealed, and holiness glories in its most illustrious radiance. The cross is the fulness of love; the cross is the security of peace; the cross is the pledge of salvation; and the application of the blood of Jesus, not its intellectual apprehension but the application of the blood of Jesus, secures pardon, and holiness, and heaven.

W. M. PUNSHON,
Penny Pulpit, No. 7896.

ILLUSTRATIONS

ISAIAH xlii. 3. 'A BRUISED reed He shall not break.' In one of his sermons, Mr. William Birch says, 'I remember some years ago, while riding over one of the deserts of northern Africa, meeting with a company of Arab travellers, and dining with them in the primitive way of sitting on the sand. After dinner one of the men brought out his pipes to play. These pipes were two reeds, something like the tin whistles on which boys sometimes play, but made of cane. The man put the end of the reeds in his mouth and played Arab tunes with them, the music thus produced being soft and tremulous. When he had finished playing, he placed the reeds on the ground, and a horse happening to tread on one it was injured. I at once thought of the passage of Scripture, referring to Christ, which says, 'A bruised reed shall He not break,' and I wondered for a moment what this Arab would do. He took up the reed, and though it was bruised he did not throw it away, but sat down on the ground, and for probably half-an-hour tried gently and patiently to straighten and repair it, so that he might be able to use it again for his cheering tunes, as it was the only instrument of music in that little caravan.'

ISAIAH xlii. 10. 'SING unto the Lord a new song, and His praise from Prayer at Sea. the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea.' 'We were fog-bound in Penobscot Bay, and made harbour at Eagle

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Island. Just as the sun was setting we went on shore, and, walking toward the lighthouse, were attracted by the voice of some one in prayer. It was an impressive scene. Before us stretched out the broad Atlantic; the gathering shades of evening deepened the solitude. In the light above us was the keeper, where he had just lighted his lamp. His face was turned toward the sea; his long hair and beard were whitened with the snows of many winters. His arms were outstretched and his voice alone broke the silence, as he besought the Almighty, in the hollow of whose hands the seas are held, to protect the sailor, and to forgive his sins.

“‘Them prayers will go higher than the light,’ said our skipper, and all of us felt that we had come into the near presence of God on that lonely island far at sea.

‘Who can measure the Divine Providence that shines out from the lighthouse on Eagle Island, because of that praying lighthouse-keeper?’

ISAIAH xliii. 2. ‘WHEN thou passest through the waters I will be with *Divine thee.*’ A coasting vessel once struck on the rocks in *Protection.* a gale in the British Channel. The captain and crew took to the boats and were lost. They might have been saved had they remained on board, for a huge wave carried the vessel up among the rocks, where the ebbing tide left her high and dry. In the captain’s cabin a hymn-book was found lying on the table; it was open at a particular page, and the pencil still lay in it which had marked the favourite lines of the sailor when just entering the jaws of death. While the hurricane was howling outside the captain had drawn his pencil beside these glorious words of cheer:—

‘Jesu, lover of my soul,
 Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the billows *near me* roll,
 While the tempest still is high :
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
 Till the storm of life is past !
Safe into the haven guide,
 O receive my soul at last !’

ISAIAH xliii. 2. ‘WHEN thou passest through the waters, I will be with *God’s Presence thee.*’ The testimony of John Rogers, of Bridport, *in Death.* was one of the many beautiful deathbeds of which we have heard. The night before he died he said, ‘I am going home.’ Putting out his arm, and beckoning and smiling, he said, ‘Coming, coming.’ Early next morning he asked for his favourite testament, and, placing it close to his heart, he said, ‘I am dying, resting on Jesus: nothing remains but the death-struggle. Christ is my all in all.’ The passage was repeated to him, ‘Yea, though I walk through the

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valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me.' He said, 'And He will be with me to the end.' Then he gently fell asleep.

ISAIAH xliii. 2. 'WHEN thou passest through the water, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.' Among the few remains of Sir John Franklin that were found far up in the Polar regions, there was a leaf of the *Student's Manual*, by Dr. John Todd, the only relic of a book. From the way in which the leaf was turned down, the following portion of a dialogue was prominent: 'Are you not afraid to die?' 'No.' 'No! Why does the uncertainty of another state give you no concern?' 'Because God has said to me: "Fear not. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."' This leaf is preserved in the Museum of Greenwich Hospital among the relics of Sir John Franklin.

ISAIAH xliii. 8. 'BRING forth the blind people that have eyes.' Carlyle quotes out of the Koran a story of the dwellers by the Dead Sea, to whom Moses was sent. They snuffed and sneered at Moses; saw no comeliness in Moses; and so he withdrew. But Nature and her rigorous veracities did not withdraw. When next we find the dwellers by the Dead Sea, they, according to the Koran, are all changed into apes. 'By not using their souls, they lost them.' 'And now,' continues Carlyle, 'their only employment is to sit there and look out into the smookiest, dreariest, most undecipherable sort of universe. Only once in seven days they do remember that they once had souls. Hast thou never, O traveller! fallen in with parties of this tribe? Methinks they have grown somewhat numerous in our day.'

The old Greek proverb was that the avenging deities are shod with wool; but the wool grows on the eyelids that refuse the light. 'Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad;' but the insanity arises from judicial blindness.

Jeremy Taylor says that whoever sins against light kisses the lips of a blazing cannon.

Outlines for the last Sunday of the Year¹

Christian Thoughts at the Close of the Year.

Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever : forsake not the works of Thine own hands.
PSALM CXXXVIII. 8.



T is a favourable hour in which we are now assembled, an hour in which we are wont to be peculiarly susceptible of religious impressions. Even he who has no hour of quiet recollection as a part of each day's work, will yet collect his thoughts for earnest contemplation on the last day of a departing year. Such hours will be well spent. The Christian Church will not allow them to pass by unprofitably. The blessing of so many such hours is lost upon us because we do not rightly define and interpret our character in them,—do not attempt or dare to give a clear explanation of it. Consequently this general and indefinite character cannot pass into clear knowledge and distinct efforts of will. It dies away without a trace, and only leaves behind in us a painful blank ; and the longer this happens, so much the more do we become distrustful of such thoughts and feelings, and consider them as mere attacks of weakness.

I. The close of the year gives us a hint, and almost compels us, to look back upon our past. And not merely on the year now expiring, but on our whole past, in which this especial year only appears as a single member unseparated from its connection with the whole. If we now thus look back upon our past, what turn will our thoughts take if they are Christian ? David shows us. He says, 'Lord !' They turn themselves to God. The thought of God establishes claim in our minds before all others. Thus it ought to be, and thus it is in the experience of most people. Those also who in the ordinary course of life think but little of God, even to them to-day such a thought comes, even if they do not express it aloud. Prompted

¹ The Sunday after Christmas is also the last Sunday of the year.

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thereto by their conscience, they gather up to-day what they find in themselves of emotions of piety ; it would seem to them unnatural if they did not do so.

And this does not merely rest on the usage of an old pious custom. It urges itself upon every one as soon as he only surveys his past as a whole. The separate points of his life, looked at singly, appear to be ruled by accident ; they seem to stand together without a higher connection to him who is not accustomed through life constantly to refer to the hand of God by faith and prayer. A feeling of the government of a God nigh at hand but seldom thrusts itself spontaneously upon him. It is different when we survey a larger portion of our life's journey. Even against our will, a connection and unity in it show themselves to us,—a plan controlling the whole, in which are interwoven all the details which appeared to us the unintelligible acting of an unthinking chance. We are forced to acknowledge to ourselves that an all-guiding power rules our life, and not only this, but also an all-guiding reason. And should we not willingly give ourselves up to this thought, at first sight at least ? It is so inspiring and elevating to our inmost souls, if we can say to ourselves,—Yes, there is still a God who lives. He also governs me and my life. There is nothing more destructive than the thought that either a blind chance or an iron fate governs us. We thus behold God in our lives in such a retrospect.

But what aspect of God especially strikes our attention ? What before everything else ? 'Thy mercy, O Lord,' the Psalmist says, 'endureth for ever.' All the divine qualities step for him into the background before that of mercy. He sees in his past the guidance of eternal love. He sees in it all the other perfections of God,—power, wisdom, justice,—only serving in His guidance as means for the ends of love. Thus it presents itself to the eyes of the Psalmist, so shall it also place itself before our own. Who is it, then, that really receives such an impression on this retrospect ? It depends upon three conditions.

(1) In the first place, he alone receives this impression who really feels and acknowledges his sins, and therefore feels himself unworthy of all benefits before God.

(2) Secondly, he only receives this impression whose real purpose in this life is his moral improvement and perfection, to bring his union with God to still more intimate communion,—who estimates the value of all the events of life according as they are adapted to further this purpose.

(3) In order to receive a truly living impression of this mercy of God in such a retrospect, there is one other thing assumed. A great many recognise it as mercy, but cannot really succeed in feeling it as

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such. They feel it only as holiness, and even as patience, long sufferance, and forbearance. That God arranges everything practically in the course of their life, in order to promote the fulfilment of their life's work, they can see very clearly; but are they touched by it in a beneficial, gladdening, and elevating way? No, and for this reason, that they trace no real result from all these divine arrangements. They do not observe that they really approach the aim of such holiness and communion with God. A burden of sins lies on their souls, which is ever increasing with all such divine arrangements. All God's discipline, all His forbearance and toleration, only increase the weight of their self-accusation in their inmost souls. One thing is still wanting. They are not yet pursuing the right object in the only right way, in the way of faith in the Redeemer. They have not yet, through faith in Him (confirmed in their hearts), received the forgiveness of their sins and the power of true holiness, the power of the Holy Ghost. But if they have once obtained this, if their hearts have received peace in Christ, then they rejoice in all those divine arrangements.

And now they look around them, from their own poor existence, to the guidance of the human race in general; for they do not take merely a narrow-minded interest in themselves, but they live in the great whole, and have in it their best life. Here also they see, if they survey a large portion in connection, a systematic and unerring guidance of God to Christ,—a sure, if slow, leading on of a kingdom of everlasting glory in Him. Then they cry again with a full heart, 'Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever.'

II. And with this consciousness, the Christian now looks forward to the future, and continues, 'Forsake not the works of thine own hands.' He looks upon it without anxiety, although it is for him a dark and unknown land, in which he can discern and calculate on no step beforehand. Vain fancies of magical glories which are to flourish for him in this unknown land are certainly far from him. On this point his previous experience has sufficiently undeceived him, and he knows that they cannot exist together with God's holy and wise arrangements; that he has also to expect work, pain, and conflict in his future, because this is the only way profitable for him. He certainly does not, in presumptuous pride, imagine himself to be the master of his future, or that he is able, by his own wisdom, art, and power, to guide the helm of his fate through the stormy floods.

No, quite the contrary; he looks forward into the future with a feeling of deep humility,—with the feeling that he is entirely 'the work of God's hands,' and not merely the creating and sustaining hands of God, but also especially His redeeming and regenerating hands. All that he finds in himself of true life, that is to say, of

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communion with and likeness to Christ, he knows and feels to be God's work. He knows that without God, and by himself, he can do nothing really good,—scarcely even anything at all. Not only is he incapable of the beginning of a new divine existence and life, but also of perseverance therein.

But this does not discourage him, for he possesses it in an unshaken reason for joyful confidence. He is the work of God's hands, therefore he is dear and worthy, and God will not give him up. He cannot guide and help himself, but God will do it for him, and carry out perfectly the good work begun in him. It only depends on this, that he silently considers himself the work of God's hands, and unconditionally surrenders himself to Him, and that henceforth he must do more and more. However weak and faithless he may feel himself, God is still strong and faithful. He will also in all his future be indebted for everything to no one but God. From Him he knows that His mercy endureth for ever. Truly, it will also govern his future. He trusts himself confidently to it, because he really knows it,—is perfectly certain of it. He openly confides to God all the wishes of his heart; he knows certainly that he has a living, free God who can listen to prayer. But also with complete resignation. 'Thy will be done,' he says, from the full truth of his soul, for he knows and feels the will of God to be the will of everlasting mercy. 'Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake not the works of thine own hands.'

R. ROTHE,

Sermons for the Christian Year, p. 65.

The Right Way.

And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.
PSALM cxvii. 7.

WE cannot really judge of things until we have seen the whole of them. And, as no one has seen the whole of his own life, no one can form a true judgment of his life. And even if a man could see the whole of his own life, still, as he cannot know all its bearings upon other lives, he would be an imperfect judge. And no life—nor any one event in any life—is an isolated thing; so that we are driven to the conclusion that the only mind which could take it in, which could take in the whole life of one man, and all the lives of all men, is Omniscience. Only Omniscience can really judge anything!

But, as time goes on, we all learn to qualify our judgments, and rectify many mistakes which we made about our own lives. For, what was once a subject of pure faith, becomes a matter of actual

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experience. Promises grow into facts. Many things we thought wrong turn out to have been quite right. Things which seemed to be 'all against us,' Jacob-like, we find to have been quite *for us*. Our worst trials our best blessings!

For, as life goes on, we see ends. And we can more humbly wait and expect what it will be when the end of ends comes. Already, our God has justified Himself.

And, if it were only for this, we ought to be better, as we get older, for we are able to see what once was only a matter of trust. Evil turns out very good. The mysteries of one period are the very lights which shine the most brightly in another. God we find so very wise, and we were very foolish; and we can put-to our seal, and say, of many a thing of which we once complained and condemned, 'It was a right way.'

And now we have come to another of those high ridges on the road, on which it is well that the traveller stop a moment, and take his reckoning of the journey. Such as perhaps Moses took when, from the top of Nebo, he might be able at once to see both the land of promise, as it lay at his feet, and the tract which he had gone in the desert, stretching out behind him.

And we, looking back this day on the way we have come, are helped, by the experience of another year, to take a truer retrospect. And, though many spots in it may be still wrapped in clouds, and we cannot explain them, yet other things, once as dark, have come out so clear that even reason and knowledge can help faith the more to write upon it all, 'The right way!' 'The right way!'

And remember, when I say 'The right way,' it means not 'the right way' generally and abstractedly, but 'the right way' *for me*. The 'way' I could bear; the 'way' I wanted; the best for my character and my strength: 'the right way' for me.

Now, concerning that 'right way,' I wish you first to notice that the record does not run, '*They went* the right way,' but '*He led them* by the right way.' And who ever found 'the right way' who was not '*led*'? And if you have gone any very really *wrong way* this year, was not it only because you either did not look out for the *leadings*, or you did not follow them when you saw them?

Have not all the great mistakes of your life been that you went *before God*? You did not ask for tokens; or you did not wait for tokens; or you did not believe in tokens; or you did not obey tokens! You neglected the signals! What wonder if there were disasters, if not wrecks!

But if *He* 'leads,' not only is the path safe, but *He* is there; and the straighter you walk, the nearer you are to Him; and that makes more than safety,—presence, life, communion, joy!

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But there is a part of God's leadings which we must not overlook—*hedgings*. Israel was stopped and hedged in many times in the wilderness. They must not start, when they wanted to start: they must not go back, when they wanted to go back. They were prevented from going to this country, and to that country.

You would miss a great deal of the *leadings* if you fail to notice and respect the hedgings. I should say the hedgings are better than the leadings. But the hedgings are often very sharp!

Let us look at one or two of the particular features of the leadings in the wilderness. It may be we shall find the counterpart in some things which have happened to us during the past year.

The Israelites had a very little way to go, and they were a very long time about it. What seemed a matter of days, took many years. When they first set out, they must have thought that they would have reached the end in a very short space. But it proved a weary length, and they were kept the longest in very unlikely places. Especially just as they were on the very borders of their home.

This must have looked to them anything but 'right.' But it *was* 'right.' There were reasons that they never guessed, the other side of Jordan, in the land of Canaan; and they themselves—though they knew it not—were not ripe, they were not ready for the rest.

Is it so with you? Have you been a very long time getting on a very little way? At the first, but specially at the last, did heaven seem to you to get further and further off, and did you doubt, and question, and wonder why what was expected to be so quick, was so exceedingly slow? And have you lived all this time and found no reason?

The fightings of God's people in the wilderness were all at the beginning and at the end of it. It is generally so with God's saints. There are some very hard battles as they set out upon their new way to heaven—for God always tries and exercises the grace that He has given. But the hardest, if I mistake not, will be at the last, even at the threshold.

Have you found anything like this?

And they had strange ups and downs. Their road, as we trace it on the map, is a perfect riddle. Now quite near, and then back again, far, far away, almost to where they set out.

Perhaps some of us can tell to-day a like story!

And it was all in dependence—most absolute and humble dependence for everything. They could look to themselves for nothing. Not a drop nor a crumb, nothing came from the wilderness,—all direct from God Himself.

It was all trust. They had to trust for the morrow. But it all came,—sure, regular, abundant.

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And who ever went the road to heaven without learning—temporally and spiritually—the same humiliating but assuring lesson?

And the leading was the clearest where the need was the greatest. The cloud by day, the light by night. God's universal method. In our sunny days, His hand dimly seen, and His voice low. But in our darkest hours, bright, distinct, glorious!

Still, it was a restless life they lived these forty years. In tents, which they pitched, and had soon to strike. Always shifting, always moving. And they scarcely knew when or where.

Just as perhaps life has lately been to some of us. The old things seem strangely to be breaking up, and very unsettled. Nothing continuing in one stay. So that sometimes life has seemed a mere *mirage*, made up of dissolving views, one after another, melting away at the touch!

And why this to them? And why to us? The answer is simple. *It is not home.* We are but 'strangers and pilgrims.' We must sit loose, and not tarry long by the way. It is 'the right way,' *but it is only 'a way.'* And we are prone to say, 'It was good for me to be here!' and mistake our 'tabernacles' for our 'houses,' while He is all the while leading us forth to 'go to a city of habitation.'

The expression, 'city of habitation,' of course is intended to contrast with the tent of the wilderness. And our Saviour (in His and His disciples' bitter hour of separation) had the same thought probably in His mind when, sad at the going out and coming in which make our world, He said, 'In My Father's house are many mansions,' abiding-places; resting-places. Not like this! Where there shall be no parting, but, as S. John saw it, 'they shall be as pillars in the temple of our God,' on which the very stability of the whole building depends: 'they shall be as pillars in the temple of our God, and shall go no more out.'

That will be the place, that will be the time to see how 'right the way' was, when looking back, 'a thousand years will look as one day, and one day as a thousand years,' for we shall look with the eye of God; and we shall see and know how 'the humblings' and 'the provings' were all 'to do us good in our latter end,' and how we were being educated up, I do not say to the dignities, and the duties, and the privileges of the citizenship of that 'city of habitation'; but each one of us to our own particular spot and sphere, which we are to occupy in that glorious 'city.'

Not one sorrow, not one trouble, not one tear, not one mortification, not one fall too many. They were 'the right way'; they were the *only 'way'*; they were *His 'way'* to heaven.

But, oh! the contrast of this life of folly to that world of reality! *Here*, the strongest of our poor little structures falls, because it

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has no corner-stone. But *there* is 'the city that hath *foundations*, whose Builder and Maker is God!'

Here, families outgrow their houses, and people find their native land too small, and men are forced to go out and colonise, to fulfil the first primary law given to man, to 'replenish the whole earth.' But *there*, are habitations large enough for all, and dwelling-places where families will never separate!

Here, the weary pilgrims toil their desert way. But *there*, the traveller has laid down his staff for the sweet eternity of rest.

Here, the years roll round and round their course. The old year wanes, and leaves its chasms, and its reproachful memories!—the thousand things left undone, and all that is done, done so badly; and the New Year comes in, and brings its uncertainties and its fears. But *there*, where nothing clashes, there shall be room for every duty, and space for every affection, in the unsinning and unanxious solaces of the perpetual freshness of one eternity of love.

And when there we read the little chapter of life, this will be the sum and substance of the history:—'He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation!'

J. VAUGHAN,
Brighton Pulpit, No. 983.

Our Stewardship.

Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.
S. LUKE xvi. 2.

I. **T**HE rich man in the parable is God. We are accused unto Him that we have wasted His goods. The accuser is Satan, our great enemy, who is for ever accusing the brethren before God. Whatever has been intrusted to our charge corresponds with the 'goods' here spoken of. Of course our money is one of the things alluded to. But nothing which we are apt to call ours can be left out. And the essential and the startling circumstance is contained in the proof which the parable affords, that however prone we may be to regard all these things as our own, they are claimed by God as being in reality His. The absolute owner of a mansion may pull it down if he will; the tenant may but occupy it so long as the owner pleases. The lord of an estate may transfer the estate to another if he will; the steward may but manage the property, liable at any moment to be called upon to give an account of his proceedings, and to pay over the gains which have accrued to the state in consequence of his management. The very condition of his occupation is, that the gains shall be accounted for to another.

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II. Where is the man who, looking over the whole extent of his stewardship, will venture to hope that a cunning and watchful enemy could not truly accuse him unto his God that he has wasted his goods?

Is not the close of another year a fit rehearsal of the end of all things. A definite portion of our existence has now come to an end. Shall we not call *ourselves* to strict account now, in these the days of our security and peace? Let us judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord.

J. W. BURGON,

Ninety-one Short Sermons, p. 89.

Tribulation and Comfort.

In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. S. JOHN xvi. 33.

I. IN the world ye shall have tribulation. Who of us does not agree with such words, and especially on a day like the present, when we look at that part of our life now left behind us? Yes, indeed, in the world we do have tribulation; we cry when we think of the thousand kinds of pains and sorrows which we have suffered this year; of the troubles and toils that we have had in it, when in the sweat of our brow we eat our bread; of the burden and heat which each day brought with it, and under which we sighed. And to the trouble and toil is added the self-denial which life demands of us. This we must endure for the sake of the highest and best that life has. Then there are the many vain wishes and hopes, the disappointments, cares, and privations, and the many kinds of bitter losses which tear our heart in pieces; and greater than all, the certainty that this earthly life has an end, and the uncertainty which, alas, so many feel as to what will follow it hereafter. And there are not only our own sorrows; but we have—it is God's will that we should—a sympathetic heart for the countless sorrows, tears, and pains which we see around us. Life would be easy if each one had to bear only his own burden,—if the manifold sorrows of others did not lie on his heart. But all this is only one side of life, and it would be ill for the nobleness of our race if we only regarded the dark side,—if we did not know how to find the bright side also. It is true, life has not few sorrows. But there are also joys in the world, and most for the noblest. And even when our own life is quite poor, and deprived of all which can delight us, sympathy with the happiness of our brother must stir our hearts. Our Lord does not call everything that we have in the world tribulation. All that often seems so dark to us, the privations we so often bewail, the mortifications which seem so bitter to us, if we looked at them rightly, we should

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see that they really are most precious to our existence,—that these incurable wounds which life inflicts on us are most wholesome for our life, and often produce most blessed fruits. Tribulation is not the right designation for these. Tribulation is not every pain, but one to which fear is joined ; the fear of any danger which threatens us ; of a problem which we know not how to solve ; the fear of losing a good which is promised to us, but which we have not yet really in our possession ; the anxiety as to how we shall accomplish the conflict prescribed for us, and whether we shall not succumb.

It is a special tribulation of which our Lord speaks in the words of our text, and which lay so heavily on the souls of the disciples. It was the struggle which they had to undergo for Christ with the world. A new divine life had risen for them in the Redeemer,—a life which the world had not, and did not understand. They were to bring this life to it. Their whole appearance and work in the world was an appeal to it. And how were they answered ? Generally by nothing else than scorn and ridicule, unbelief and persecution. And they had to set themselves, during their whole life, opposed to the dark world and all its powers, to keep their light upon the candlestick where their Lord had placed it. They had to do this against a world which, hostilely disposed, refused not only to receive life from God, but would never even allow a word concerning this life to be spoken. It had no heart to meet the love which God brought it, no eyes for the truth and grace which shone upon it in its darkness. So they had tribulation in the world, and we also feel it as they did, and especially on a day like the present it affects us with double power. We feel that the world is a world of sin ; we are sensible of the fearful power with which sin rules in the world, and particularly in the small world which each one bears within himself.

II. And what does our Lord say to us when we speak thus to Him ? Yes, in the world we have tribulation, and we feel how hard it must be for His people in this dark world. 'Be of good cheer,' He says ; 'I have overcome the world.' His answer sounds very different from that of men, to whom we may have poured out our complaint. How often, when we lament the power of sin, do we not hear men try to trifle away our complaints with light laughter !

So does not the Lord speak in our text. He does not say either that we should throw our life away, or despair of that which alone is of true and abiding value. 'Be of good cheer,' He says to us. And we must own that there is no real consolation other than this for us. 'Be of good cheer,' we must say to ourselves ; 'the world oppresses thee, but wilt thou faint-heartedly yield to this oppression ? Up, up, nerve thyself, collect all thy strength, do not show the world the tribulation which thou hast in thy heart ; and if thou art forced to

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succumb, yet do not give up thy purpose.' At least we must speak thus if we would show ourselves worthy of our nobility. But this consolation, which we make for ourselves, would be but a poor one, giving us no help. Far otherwise when it is Christ who speaks to us. 'Be of good cheer,' He says; 'do not despair of the noblest tasks of this life, and do not ever give up what is precious to you.' He does not ignore the tribulation which must come to us on account of our best earthly good things. 'In the *world* ye shall have tribulation,' He says; 'but be of good cheer,' He adds, 'I have overcome the world.'

It is not an idle spectator of our tribulation, standing by the wayside, who says it to us, but One who Himself has fought the battle as none other beside Him ever fought. When He was entering upon His fiercest struggle, He said these words from the clear height of his consciousness, in that moment when the prince of this world awaited Him, who should find nothing in Him. He was humbled unto death on the cross, and yet He triumphed just at the moment when He seemed most overcome. He arose from the grave, and was raised to the majesty of God. The hostile world was subdued to Him, and although it may not yet believe it, hereafter it shall be forced to bow the knee before Him, with all that is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth.

This Conqueror in the hardest fight, this glorified Victor says to us, 'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world,' and with that He gives us a sure ground for our confidence. Whoever believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God has overcome it, and does overcome it daily. The Lord Himself imparts to Him the triumph which He has borne in His own breast, and through the Holy Ghost He causes it to live in all those that are His.

R. ROTHE,

Sermons for the Christian Year, p. 77.

Numbering our Days.

For when Thou art angry all our days are gone: we bring our years to an end as a sound that dieth away. O teach us to number our days: that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. PSALM xc. 9, 12.

THE greatness, the eternity of God, are, in this sorrowful hymn, placed in strongest contrast with the weakness and transitoriness of man. 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.' 'A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it vanisheth, and as a watch in the night.'

But as to men: 'Thou scatterest them, they are as a dream in the

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morning, yea, even as the grass which groweth up: in the morning it is green, and groweth up: in the evening it is dried up, and withered. We bring our years to an end as a tale that is told,' or, as otherwise translated, 'as a sound that dieth away.'

The troubrous times in which the Psalmist's life had been cast, had forced him to realise to the full the great truth of the transitoriness of everything human beside the eternity of God. And times and occasions arise in the lives of us all, when we see the same truth with the same clear vision, from the same aspect, and with the same result.

Turn where we will, it meets us still. In nature; in the history of the world; in the lives of nations however brilliant, or of men however illustrious. On the living great as well as the mighty dead, the same trail of decay and of transitoriness is everywhere evident. We never meet with anything of which we can say, 'This differs from the rest; over this Time passes and leaves no trace of its passage.' Even the everlasting hills, as they are called, crumble and decay and alter; and nothing animate or inanimate continues the same.

Times will come when the least thoughtful cannot help thinking. Memories force their way upon our consideration which carry us back to childhood, more than half a century of years ago. Old faces look out upon us from the dim distance like pictures on the wall, and they tell us that, old as we once thought them in our comparative youth, they had not numbered as many years as we have run. The changes we have seen since our early days, in men, in fashions, in places, are so numerous and so great, that we cannot fail to see that we are carried into the stream of all-destroying Time, and that we ourselves are only hurrying on, till at last the current, grown impatient of delay, will sweep over us, and our place on earth shall know us no more. Times of sickness and trouble, of anxiety on private and public grounds, of domestic and national disturbances, are God's messengers specially sent to bear us this mournful, yet kindly, warning.

I. The last Sunday of the year speaks to us in language to which we cannot close our ears. There is something like the loss of human friendship in the passing away of the old year, and its last faint whispers impress themselves with the greater force because we know the power to speak is ebbing fast. It is a very solemn thing to lose a friend. We are apt indeed to look on such a deprivation only from our own selfish point of view, as the loss of a kind, pure, and tender heart, as the loss of one who was our comforter in sorrow and our companion in joy. But there is a sadder view than this to take of such a loss. Friendship is a great talent, one we are meant to make the most of, one for which we shall be called to solemn account. What did we do with it? Did we walk in the house of God as

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friends? Did we use a mutual friendship for a mutual good? Did we protect each other from harm? Did we cheer, and animate, and exhort each other to good works? Or did we lend ourselves to mutual misleading?

In like manner should we question ourselves as to the past year. It is of no use to sentimentalise and moan over that which cannot be recovered. We have used it; we have spent it, every day, every hour; not one moment is saved and put by. Now let us calmly look at it, and see what we have done with it. One day we must render a far more strict account. Let us now, while we have time to use its lessons, ask what it has done for us; what is our gain or what our loss; how we have maintained or yielded our ground.

II. And in our self-examination we are, at the outset, struck by the rapidity with which the year has fled, and the completeness with which it has passed out of existence. It is like some sweet music which fills us with momentary pleasure, but of which, when it is over, nothing remains but the memory. 'We bring our years to an end as a sound that dieth away,' and as we try to recall it, it is strange how little we remember. To many of us each succeeding day and week and month were so like their forerunners, that we find it difficult to distinguish any one in particular, or to identify them with any memorable event, if indeed there are any which we can call memorable. The same occupation, the same work, the same amusements, absorb them all alike with but few exceptions, so that the year, if we attempt to unravel it, seems an inextricable mass of hopeless confusion.

But the material consideration in our retrospect is not what we have done, what we have seen, where we have been, what we have heard. Rather it is, What did the year find us when we began it? and what has the year left us now that it has passed away? This is the important question, for in the answer we are able to give will be found the use we have made of the year that is gone. We do not need to think upon the number or importance of the incidents of that time; but their influence over us, upon our heart and character, should occupy our solemn meditation; for as it is at the close of the year, so will it be at the close of life. Our anxious concern will then be neither the poverty, nor the wealth, nor the brilliancy, nor the humility of our career, but the doubt of our fitness or our unfitness for heaven—the fear that we have striven too feebly against the polluting influences of a vicious world, the question whether we have emerged from the struggle with our evil natures victors or vanquished, further from or nearer to that holiness and purity of heart without which no man shall see the Lord.

III. The very first step towards wisdom is to detect our past errors,

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and to see the folly of our previous life. No change for the better will ever be effected in us until we know our weakness and our sinfulness. We learn wisdom by the eloquence of folly, as a child learns to walk by the hard lessons of many a fall. The bitterness of sorrow for sin teaches us the wisdom of holiness; and the true lessons of wisdom are never learned till we gain the habit of looking at our own insignificance by the side of the majesty and eternity and holiness of God, in whose eyes a thousand years are but as yesterday, seeing that is passed as a watch in the night, and before whose radiant purity the angels themselves veil their faces.

CANON PROTHERO.

The Armour of Light, p. 33.

The Appeal of the Past.

Thus saith the Lord: I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord. JEREMIAH ii. 2.

A FAVOURITE prophetic figure, common in Jeremiah and other prophets, is that which speaks of Israel as the bride of God. It is a beautiful thought, that God had married Israel, claimed her exclusively as His, honouring her with a great love, and sealing her to Himself, making her the pure bride of Heaven. The figure is delicately touched in this fine verse which recalls the early call of Israel. So all idolatry, in keeping with the same figure, is as the breaking of the marriage bond, a wilful and scandalous unfaithfulness, the nation deserting the true God who is as a husband unto her with all the rights of love and of law.

In the name of God, Jeremiah solemnly charges the nation with infidelity. In turning to idols and the lower worship of idolatry, she is defiling herself with unworthy lovers. Jeremiah here contrasts Israel's infidelity with God's faithfulness. 'I remember,' is Jehovah's lament, recalling in fond memory His choice of her and delight in her. The prophet also contrasts Israel's present infidelity with her past faithfulness, as seen idealised through the mists of history. 'I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.' Israel with all her faults had a great and noble past. To memory it is very beautiful—even to God.

It is God's love which is here first of all emphasised rather than Israel's. He recalls to them His kindness and gracious condescension and the love which made Him espouse them. He would soften them with the thought of it, remind them of His watchful, sleepless

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love, and make them feel ashamed of their heartless desertion of Him now. But they too had once been faithful to Him in the kindness and glory of youth, in the love of the first espousals. 'Israel was holiness unto the Lord,' consecrated to Him, 'the first fruits of his increase,' and so protected by Him in loving care from all enemies. But alas! this idyllic relation is broken: the strong religious bond no longer unites Israel to God.

The folly of it oppresses the prophet. The shame of Israel's infidelity is increased by the thought of the poor choice they made. The insult to God might have been less if the new object of their love were more worthy. They might at least have given Him a fitter rival! There is fierce scorn and contemptuous sarcasm in the way the prophet speaks of this. To desert God, the bride's first love, with His kiss of the espousals warm on her cheek, was a crime; but to desert Him for this was also a shame, a lasting disgrace. So contemptible does it seem to him to turn from the pure spiritual worship of the living God to the degrading rites of idolatry, nay, so astounding that he would expect to see the very heavens frown and the skies laugh with mocking irony. 'Be ye astonished, oh ye heavens, at this.' He even contrasts Israel's infidelity with heathen faithfulness to their false gods. 'Hath a heathen nation changed their gods though they are no-gods, but my people have changed their glory for that which profiteth not?' It is terrible blindness which does not see the highest, which cannot see the best. The insanity of the choice weighs on the prophet's heart. To choose the palpably lower seems such incredible folly.

Yet what common folly it is! Is there no counterpart of that folly in our own lives? Are any of us at this very time turning our hearts towards a lower ideal, which we confess in our sane moments to be lower, choosing the part which our conscience tells us to be not the better part? Are any of us giving up the highest because it is too high, shutting our eyes to the light that would lead us upward and our ears to the manifest call of God? Are we letting in business and pleasure and all worldly and selfish thoughts and aims and ambitions, and shutting out Christ? Are none of us to-day making the great refusal? The tragedy, so like a farce, that was played before Jeremiah's eyes, is it not repeated again and again? The folly at which he stood aghast, is it not enacted daily in our midst?

Some can remember a kindness of youth, an early love and faith, an early committal, an early plighting of troth, an early heroism that chose the wilderness if need be.

Memory is one of the good angels of God recalling the past in the ethical interests of the present and the future. Sometimes it

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works through the failures and mistakes and follies and sins of other days, working in us shame and humility and repentance. How can we be proud or vain-glorious or self-sufficient, when at a touch pages of the written book can be turned back to disclose to us what we were or did? Memory is repentance, and repentance is a gate of life. Sometimes it works on other lines, not by a recollection of past failure and sin, but by a recollection of past faith and love and joy and peace. It reminds us of the kindness of youth and the love of early days and the first high thoughts and noble passions. We can be touched as truly and profoundly by the recollection of goodness, by seeing ourselves again in the mirror of the past as we were at our best. The contrast can move us, as the prophet sought to move Israel by that picture of their devotion when Israel was holiness unto the Lord.

The offence of idolatry by the Jews was a thousand times worse than the heathen's offence, for it was *apostasy*; it was as the shameful breach of the marriage vow. To rightly appreciate our own situation with regard to the past and all God's gracious love revealed in it, we need to use the same prophetic figures and to put something of the same moral passion into the words. When we have looked back to that sacred spot in our past, we have to ask ourselves with something of the same indignation, turning the edge of the irony to our own hearts, will we commit the folly, the glaring infidelity, the terrible apostasy of denying that sacred past? Will we harden our hearts as the sweet thought of it comes back to us? One of the deadliest sins of middle life and of age is irreverence of the dreams of youth, sneering at early piety or early earnestness, declaring that then we were ignorant and foolish and full of impossible ideals, but that now we have seen more of life and know the world, and are too wise ever again to be entrapped into high feeling or burning zeal or self-forgetful devotion. It is a low deep when a man so views the past; for he is hardening his heart against its appeal.

If God remembers, shall we forget? If God recalls to us some such time of early faith and decision, shall we not use the memory to dower our life again with a new obedience? If God reminds us of the kindness of our youth, the love of our espousals, when we fell in love with His will and lost our hearts to His life, when in the passion of a great resolve we counted all things but loss that we might gain Him, and were willing to follow Christ into the wilderness if He would but bless us with a look of love, will we not use this revived recollection as a new opportunity, and turn to Him again, and once more espouse ourselves in glad and full surrender?

O my soul, if God remembers for thee the love of thine espousals,
shalt thou forget?

HUGH BLACK.

Christ's Service of Love, p. 316.

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The Christian Benediction.

THIS threefold invocation is familiarly known as the Christian Benediction. The Old Testament form of blessing was authorised to be used in the assemblies of Israel, but there is nothing to indicate that these words were ever intended for regular use in the gatherings of the Christian Church. They have been chosen for universal use because of their appropriateness; for they are both a confession of the Christian faith, and a declaration of Christian privilege. The Benediction of the New Covenant marks a great advance upon that of the Old. ‘And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel; ye shall say unto them:

‘The Lord bless thee and keep thee:

‘The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

‘The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace:

‘So shall they put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.’

In that Name put upon the children of Israel, everything is omitted that makes the Name of God distinctively Christian. There is no mention of the Divine Fatherhood, the Divine Son, or the Divine Spirit. Neither is there any mention of the love of God, the grace of Christ, or the communion of the Holy Ghost. It conveys no sense of nearness, but gives the impression that God is remote, transcendental, and majestic, who graciously condescends to bless Israel His people. The Christian Benediction brings God near in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. It sets forth,—

I. The Christian Doctrine of God.

II. The Christian Realisation of God.

III. The Christian Manifestation of God.

I. The revelation of God was necessarily a slow development. To gird at the imperfections and limitations of the Old Testament is to misunderstand the nature of the revelation, and to ignore the only possible method of education. The revelation was to the consciousness of the Nation, and had to be accommodated to the moral and spiritual capacity of the people. The coming of Christ waited for the fulness of time, and as with Christ, so with truth. The God of discrimination sent forth His light and truth as men were prepared to receive it. There are those who cannot understand why

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the Sermon on the Mount was not preached at Sinai, and why the world was kept waiting for ages for the Gospel of Christ. They are perplexed because the Scriptures represent God associated with things that shock our moral sense, and forget that the revelation of God came through the troubled history of an ancient people. God could only reveal as they were able to bear. Even Jesus had to close His ministry with many things unspoken, because the disciples could not receive them. The history of Israel is virtually the history of the educational process, by which they came to the knowledge of God. He declared himself in mighty deeds rather than in words; through long ages He chastened them, and sent His prophets to interpret His name through their experience. Thus, slowly and through much tribulation, they came to know the Lord.

The first thing to be learned was the falseness of Polytheism and Idolatry. They came out from a land that worshipped an elaborate system of deities, and were surrounded by worshippers of false gods. The heathen multiplied gods according to their fears. The snare of Israel was idolatry. Every new crisis renewed the temptation to establish deities like other nations. An invisible God lacked location and tangibility. Spiritual worship makes demands of a high order on the intelligence and moral powers of the worshipper, and it is not surprising that Israel was so ready to lapse into the worship of idols. The one great declaration to the delivered people, therefore, was, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.' The two first commandments aimed at the preservation of the people from false gods and idolatry. 'I am the Lord thy God . . . Thou shalt have none other Gods beside Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor the likeness of any form that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them nor serve them.' It took Israel thousands of years to learn the lesson of those two commandments. The one great truth of the Old Testament revelation is the unity of God.

The Christian revelation comes to us through Jesus Christ. The communication of the truth concerning God is no longer confined to the prompting of men's minds, but is revealed in the Person of the Son of God. He came to reveal the Father, and declared that only He could reveal Him. At the close of His ministry He claimed to have accomplished His Mission. He said to Philip, 'He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father'; and to God He said, 'I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do. . . . I manifested Thy Name . . . and I made known unto them Thy Name.' That manifestation involves a Trinity of Persons in the One God. The word Trinity is not

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found in the Scriptures, nor is the doctrine of the Trinity formally stated. The Scriptures do not systematise doctrine; they furnish data and leave the work of systematising to others. But the Trinity lies at the foundation of all New Testament teaching. Jesus claimed to be equal with God, and spoke of the Spirit as Personal and Divine, and yet there are not three Gods, but One. The Apostles everywhere proclaim His doctrine, and recognise the threefold distinction in the Persons of the One God. The equal Deity of the Son and Spirit with the Father is the mystery and the glory of the Gospel they preach.

The Benediction stands closely linked with the Baptism of Jesus and the Baptismal formula He gave to His disciples.

In the Benediction S. Paul invokes the Trinity as the Source of Grace, Love, and Communion. Its unique features must not be overlooked. The order is unusual; and the Names used are unusual. He places the Son before the Father. He does not speak of them as Son, Father, and Spirit, but as the Lord Jesus Christ, God, and the Holy Ghost. The explanation of these things is found in the fact that this is not a Doxology, not primarily a confession of faith, but a Benediction. A Doxology is an ascription of praise; a Benediction is a word of blessing. One ascends from the heart of man to God, the other descends from God to man. Consequently the Benediction does not approach the subject from the standpoint of theology, but of experience. It is not concerned with definition, nor does it contemplate the glory of God in the absoluteness of His Deity, but it sets Him forth as He is realised in the soul. The process is in this order. We come to the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, and the Spirit is the gift of both the Father and the Son. It is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we come to the knowledge of the love of God, and it is by grace and love we enter into the life of communion with the Holy Ghost.

II. This Benediction sums up the blessings of Christian privilege in the three great words of the Gospel—GRACE: LOVE: COMMUNION.

These three gifts of God are attributed to different Persons in the Trinity. Grace is attributed to our Lord Jesus Christ, Love to God, and Communion to the Holy Ghost. There is a distinction of functions as well as of Persons in the Godhead. Each takes precedence in His own peculiar work, and there seem to be distinct limitations in the operation of each. We cannot trace the limits, and must be careful lest we divide to our hurt, and conceive of God as Three and not One. Each belongs to All. Grace is of God and of the Spirit as well as of the Son. Love is of the Son and of the Spirit as well as of the Father. Our Communion is with the Father and the Son as well as with the Spirit. Grace, Love, and Communion

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munition are of the One God, as Father, Son, Spirit is the One Name of God. But in the economy of Redemption, Grace comes to us through Jesus, Love is of the Father, and Communion by the Holy Ghost. These distinctions interpret Christian experience, and are necessary to its existence.

'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The word grace is S. Paul's token in every Epistle. Eight of them close with the Benediction, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you,' sometimes varying the form to 'with your spirit.' The fuller Benediction is the development of what is involved in the abiding of grace. It leads to the consciousness of love and the life of communion; it is the great word of the Gospel of Christ. It is more than mercy and greater than love. Justice demands integrity, mercy is the ministry of pity, love seeks correspondence, appreciation and responsiveness, but grace demands no merit; it flows unrestrained and undeserved upon those who have no goodness to plead, and no claim to advance. Grace seeks the unfit and the unworthy. It is love, mercy, and compassion stretching out towards the guilty, ungracious and rebellious. It is the only hope for sinful men. If salvation come not by grace, it can never be ours. Without grace, there can be no reconciliation, no pardon, no peace. We are saved by grace. 'God commendeth His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Redemption originated in that disposition of the Divine mind. It was by the grace of God Jesus Christ tasted death for every man, and it is to the same grace every man owes his salvation. It begins in grace, is continued in grace, and is perfected in grace. At no stage is it of works; it is a gift of God, the outflowing of His grace.

'And the love of God.' It does not invoke the love of the Father, but of God. He is contemplated in the completeness of His Being, and the Name is used which includes all relationships. The Christian revelation concerning Him is that He is Love. From everlasting to everlasting God is Love. Does not the fact of Eternal Love involve personal subjects and objects of love within the Godhead? Is it possible to conceive of love absolutely unrelated? It was Eternal Love that gave the gift of the Eternal Son. Love was behind grace, and grace made way for Love. Christ brings us to the Father, and makes known to us the love of God. 'Love could not flow to us save through the grace of atonement; and the grace of atonement could not flow to us save through the love of God.' Realisation of the love of God in the redeeming work of grace brings the conscious experience of the love of God to the soul. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart through the Holy Ghost.

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'And the communion of the Holy Ghost.' Grace leads to love, and love opens the way to communion. As grace is through Jesus Christ and love is of God, so communion is with the Holy Ghost. The Spirit is the gift of both the Father and the Son, and is Himself the Giver of each. 'No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit'; and if 'the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts,' it is 'through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us.' The Spirit is always revealed as the immediate Agent in the communication of God to the soul. It is He who convicts and converts, assures and inspires, equips and strengthens. In the Christian kingdom He is the Paraclete, who abides with us for ever. His abiding presence in the soul is the result of accepted grace and realised love. The end of Redemption is realised in conscious communion with God through the Holy Ghost.

Communion is a great word. It means COMPANIONSHIP, PARTNERSHIP, CO-OPERATION. Communion is heart to heart fellowship, where without speech soul blends with soul. Company does not make companionship, it is the subtle consciousness of affinity and mutual love that gives the sense of intimacy. But it is more than companionship. The word implies a common possession; a mutual proprietorship as well as mutual affection. The communion of the Holy Ghost means partnership with Him. We share with Him the things of God. We are joint-possessors with Him of the wisdom, power, and glory of God.

This is the Benediction of God to man: Grace, Love, Communion. Grace through Jesus Christ, love from God, and communion with the Holy Ghost. This is the order of the Divine process. Through Christ to God and through both to the abiding Presence of the Spirit; through grace to love and through love to the life of Divine communion.

III. In what sense and to what end may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be said to be with us? It cannot mean less than a conscious personal Presence. The invocation cannot seek grace, love, and communion as gifts apart from the Persons, in whom alone they are to be found. Neither grace, love, nor communion can have any reality apart from personality. We cannot give love and withhold ourselves; there cannot be communion without mutual exchange. The prayer cannot be for anything less than for the conscious presence of God in the soul. Jesus teaches that the Father, Son, and Spirit are all equally present in the soul of the believer. Speaking of the Spirit He says, 'He abideth with you, and shall be in you'; of Himself and the Father He saith, 'If a man love Me, he will keep My word: and My Father will love him, and We will

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come unto him and make our abode with him.' The Personality is neither lost nor confused. They come distinctly as Father, Son, and Spirit, but One Lord. Jesus dwells in man the source of all grace, God abides in him the spring and perfection of all love, and the Holy Spirit communes with him and energises for all the will of God. Man is indwelt of the Triune God and dwells in Him.

What is the purpose of this Indwelling? It is by this Divine Presence in the soul that the work of man's salvation is accomplished. God cannot save man from a distance. Salvation must come from within; and God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit achieve man's restoration to holiness and fellowship by coming and dwelling in his heart. Grace, love, and communion save from within. They bring provision for every need. Grace covers the whole area of sin. It pardons the past, and delivers the sinner from his sin.

The purpose is more than personal. God dwells in men that they may become one with Himself: like Him in mind and heart, like Him in character and purpose, like Him in spirit and work. The Christian reflects his God. The qualities he finds in Him, he manifests in himself. The recipients of grace become 'stewards of the manifold grace of God.' It is given for ministering as well as for perfecting. 'God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye having always all-sufficiency in everything may abound unto every good work.' The grace by which Jesus Christ tasted death for every man is intended to produce a like spirit of sacrifice in us. 'Because He laid down His life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' If the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us, it will work in us as it worked in Him.

The Benediction defines the mission of the Church of God. It is a brotherhood by the grace of Christ, living in the love of God, and realising the spirit of communion in the Holy Ghost. Its symbol is a simple meal of commemoration, which celebrates the supreme act of grace and looks forward to its final triumph in the return of its Lord. It is a family gathering of the Brotherhood of Christ where all other considerations disappear. They dwell in the love of God, and from the beginning the reality of both the grace and love has been demonstrated in the spirit of loving and practical fellowship. Grace, love, and communion are the signs of the Divine Presence in the Christian Church.

The message of the Church to the world is the message of the Benediction. Its gospel is a gospel of grace to the lost; the burden of its message is the love of God; and it calls all men to the communion of the Spirit and the fellowship of them that believe. It brings its Good Tidings to the worthless and the unfit. Others preach the doctrine of self-righteousness and self-reliance; we preach

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a doctrine of grace which brings uttermost salvation to the uttermost sinners. Grace, Love, Fellowship! The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost; that is the Gospel and the power by which the world is to be restored and saved. Man finds his destiny in an Indwelling Divinity, and in the practice of the Divine qualities of Grace, Love, and Communion. This is man's way to his destined divinity: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen. SAMUEL CHADWICK.

Humanity and God, p. 335.

Thankfulness.

And be ye thankful. Col. iii. 15.

THIS is an abrupt appeal. Dr. Maclaren calls it a 'jet of praise.' When Paul's heart was fullest his speech was abruptest. He was constantly carried away on swelling tides of emotion. Inspiration often overwhelmed him.

We have had quite a crowd of precepts in the verses preceding the text. In the earlier portion of the verse we have been summoned to allow 'the peace of Christ' to 'rule' in our hearts, and Paul assigns a great evangelical and churchly reason for his appeal. Then suddenly he adds, 'And be ye thankful.' Immediately following this is another nobler series of Christian injunctions. So that the brief command of the text is 'a jet of praise': it rises in exquisite loveliness and grace from its fair surroundings, and shoots up as a lofty column flashing in the rays of the morning sun. Let us catch the refreshing crystal spray as it falls in delightsome plenitude.

I. *Thankfulness is a Spiritual Possibility.*

'Be ye thankful' is not uttered to mock us. It is the appeal of God, and 'God is not mocked.' Nothing is commanded which is not possible to man through grace. Every injunction of Scripture is a tacit promise of God. In the centre and soul of each exhortation is a glowing prophecy. All the precepts of grace are the anticipated history of believing readers.

Note that this grace of thankfulness is a *climacteric grace*: 'And be ye thankful.' That 'and' is very significant. There is a lesson in practical divinity in that homely copulative term. Such a succession of graces has greeted our gladdened eyes as we have read! Already these Colossians are 'holy and beloved.' They are urged to such qualities as 'kindness,' 'humility,' 'long-suffering.' They are entreated to be 'forbearing' and 'forgiving.' 'Love, which is the bond of perfectness,' is to safeguard and adorn them like a strong and exquisite girdle. 'The peace of Christ' is to reign as a king in

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the palace of their regenerated hearts. '*And be ye thankful,*' adds this wise master-builder of souls. Thankfulness is the crown of the graces.

Thankfulness is recognised as *in some degree already existing.* Paul said literally 'Become ye thankful.' Not that these Colossians were unthankful, but that they might increase in the idyllic grace. It is as if he said, 'Become *more* thankful.' Already the sacred and gentle fire burned in their hearts; Paul would have it fanned into a fervent flame. None was ever more keen to acknowledge spiritual attainments than the magnanimous Paul. He gladly owns the gratitude which now pervades their hearts. Is this sweet characteristic yours? Do all men see your thankfulness? Is any appeal on this subject simply an appeal to be *more* thankful? The soul is an unwatered garden if it be ungrateful.

As Paul uttered this word it was *a great endeavour after a grand ideal.* 'Become ye thankful.' The idea which hides in that 'become' is a constant striving after an unreach'd standard. What would life be without radiant ideals? What would life be without remote ideals? Thankfulness is, in Paul's inspired conception, a magnificent standard to which these Christians had not attained. He urges that they keep the ideal ever before them, and that they strive mightily towards it. The prize is splendid: let it be splendidly pursued. It is worth climbing the toppling crags to achieve the shining tablelands. Then climb! Ay, climb though oft with bleeding feet and tired heart! 'Become ye thankful.' Paul cared more for becoming than for being. So should we. Blessed be God for every victory gained. But more splendid triumphs are to be secured. The fields we have won are nothing to the fields to be won.

Praise must be perennial. Day and night this sparkling fountain must rise heavenward. Are we approximating towards that 'always'? Is the ideal becoming more and more distinctly actualised in us? Are we to give thanks 'for all things'? Yes. If we saw all things in their true light we would be thankful for all things. For life and death. Our lack of gratitude arises in great degree from our lack of knowledge. When we know even as also we are known, we shall for all things give thanks.

This grand ideal has *a sure secret of attainment.* All God's imperative commands are lovely possibilities. I am bidden to be thankful and I am empowered to be thankful.

After the lapse of but one verse Paul says, 'Giving thanks to God the Father *through Him.*' It is by union with the Lord Jesus we become thankful. Gratitude is evangelically achieved. All ethics are evangelically realised. Now I see why I have not been more thankful. I have too often separated myself from the source

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of power. Apart from Christ we can do nothing, but we can do all things in Him. Wouldest thou be thankful? Then seek this golden grace 'through Him.' Connect yourself with the energising centre. Cleave to the Saviour and gratitude shall well up in your soul till you give thanks always for all things. Regarded as a *general appeal*, what a summons to thankfulness is this text of mine! We are to be grateful to the All-Father for everything—life, health, friends, books, comforts, the Church, the Word of God, the heaven that smiles above us. All things!

Some have seen in this injunction a call to be grateful to man. I do not think that to be the leading idea, but it is well to give it note. Are we at all adequate in our thankfulness to our ministrant friends? Beware of ingratitude towards those who help and enrich us. Our fellows merit our thankfulness. Let none defraud his brother.

'Be amiable,' or 'be gracious,' is the rendering some scholars give to the text. And how can we better express our gratitude to God and man than by winsomeness of heart and conduct? The goodness of God should make us genial towards man. 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?' is a question which admits of many answers. I submit this as a worthy response, 'Be amiable.' Kindliness should be a stream, a refreshing stream, flowing ever from the fount of gratitude.

I cannot but think Paul meant us to read this monition as a *particularity*. The context seems to show that he is specially contemplating thankfulness for *spiritual blessings*. Oh what treasures of grace demand our praise! What phantoms of spiritual delight appear before our sight!

We do not dwell gratefully enough on our pardon through the atoning work of the Saviour. Never would our triumph end if we were thankful as we ought to be for that supreme grace. The sweet and precious gift of Christian love is in Paul's mind as he says 'Be thankful.' 'Above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness' (ver. 14). He thinks, too, of the gentle and invigorating power of peace: 'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts' (ver. 15). Then he enumerates such spiritual blessings as the Church: 'in one body' (ver. 15). Paul prized the Church beyond his chief joy. O that 'one body,' how precious it was to him! And in these days when the divinely founded Church is lightly esteemed we need to be thankful for that holy institution.

It is very seasonable to urge thankfulness for the Book which enshrines Christ's word. All Scripture is 'the word of Christ.' Be thankful for that ineffable possession. 'Here the fair tree of knowledge grows'—pluck the abundant fruit and bless the God who

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gave the tree and the literary paradise in which it grows. Arise and possess this goodly heritage.

II. *Thankfulness is a Spiritual Blessedness.*

How rich they are who are thankful! Ingratitude is impoverishment. This is so in every sphere of life, but specially in the Christian life. Paul points to a spring of endless good when he says 'Be ye thankful.'

I am increasingly assured that a vital secret of spiritual progress and benediction is gratitude to God. Far oftener than we deem souls are withered by thanklessness. In an atmosphere of gratitude the most lovely flowers bloom.

Thankfulness glorifies God. Wouldst thou honour the heavenly King who is also the heavenly Father? Be thankful. 'Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name.' When we recall our meagre gratitude to the Divine Giver of all we are stricken with penitence. Oh, how we have neglected our loving Lord! Tears of fire may well blind our eyes and scald our cheeks as we confess our oft unthankfulness. How glorious God becomes to us as we give Him thanks! We admire and trust Him more the more thankful we become. As others witness our thankfulness they see the glory of God: they are softened toward God: they are drawn toward Him. You may evangelise your friends by being thankful to your heavenly Friend.

Thankfulness is a great spiritualising force. When Paul enjoined us to be thankful he touched a master force of soul-building. What subdues the lower nature more effectually than thankfulness? It slays unbelief. Faith has no grander tonic than gratitude. When trustfulness falters rally it and gird it with strength by the recollection of God's goodness. Faith flourishes when thankfulness abounds. If I am grateful to God I must trust Him.

Thankfulness as it destroys the base elements of our nature develops all the higher. Grace grows best in the sunny air of gratitude. It etherealises all souls of men. Cultivate, I beseech you, in the power of the Spirit, this lovely virtue, and your souls shall be as a field which the Lord hath blessed.

Thankfulness is not least a blessedness because it brings us into fellowship with the hosts of heaven. We have sweet mystic communion with those happy legions when we are thankful. 'All their work is praise and love,' and when that is all our work we blend with them in sweet accord. How blessed they who do on earth what angels do above! They have recovered the lost harmonies. They are one with the upper choir. They live the heavenly life amid earthly limitations. They triumph in the earth-cottage as their elder brethren do in the mansions of delight. O my soul, come thou into that golden secret!

DINSDALE T. YOUNG.

The Enthusiasm of God, p. 161.

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The Dying Year.

So teach us to number our days. Ps. xc. 12.

1. 'THIS Psalm of man's pilgrimage through all generations has in it,' says Ewald, 'something unusually arresting, solemn, sinking deep into depths of the Divinity. Moses might well have been seized by these awful thoughts at the close of his wanderings; and the author, whoever he be, is clearly a man grown grey with vast experience, who here takes his stand at the close of his earthly course.' These verses have become the funeral hymn of Christendom, which every Church recites at the burial of its dead. And their austere and noble music may fitly inspire our meditations, as we are standing by the deathbed of another year.

2. The slow, sad experience of life wrought out in the Psalmist a twofold result—he has learned the secret both of detachment and of attachment. This aged pilgrim grows more and more weaned from the world and detached from things trivial and temporal; he stands aloof and absolved from the accidents of existence. But he clings closer and closer still to things unseen and enduring and eternal, and he is made partaker of their everlastingness. Such should be the effect of a right numbering of the days and years as they escape us—to learn at last that, though the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, yet he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. So, amid all the illusions and frailties of this transitory life, the Psalmist makes his refuge in the Rock of Ages. Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the saints find their only shelter and home in their God. To the command, 'Abide in Me,' they can answer, with happy antiphon, 'Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place.'

3. Like all the greatest spiritual poetry, this Psalm has a deep undertone of remorse and retribution. Which of us can gaze forward into his own future without a sense of judgment to come? And who dare face that future, except by humble trust in the miracle of God's reparation and atonement—that act of Divine Love and Sacrifice which retrieves and reverses our own intolerable past?

4. What does it mean to 'number our days'? Not just to calculate the chances of our own survival in this world—which we may easily gather from the actuarial tables of an insurance company. It means 'to take the measure of our days as compared with the work to be performed, with the provision to be laid up for eternity, with the preparation to be made for death, with the precaution to be taken against judgment to come. It is to estimate human life by the purposes to which it should be applied, by the eternity to which

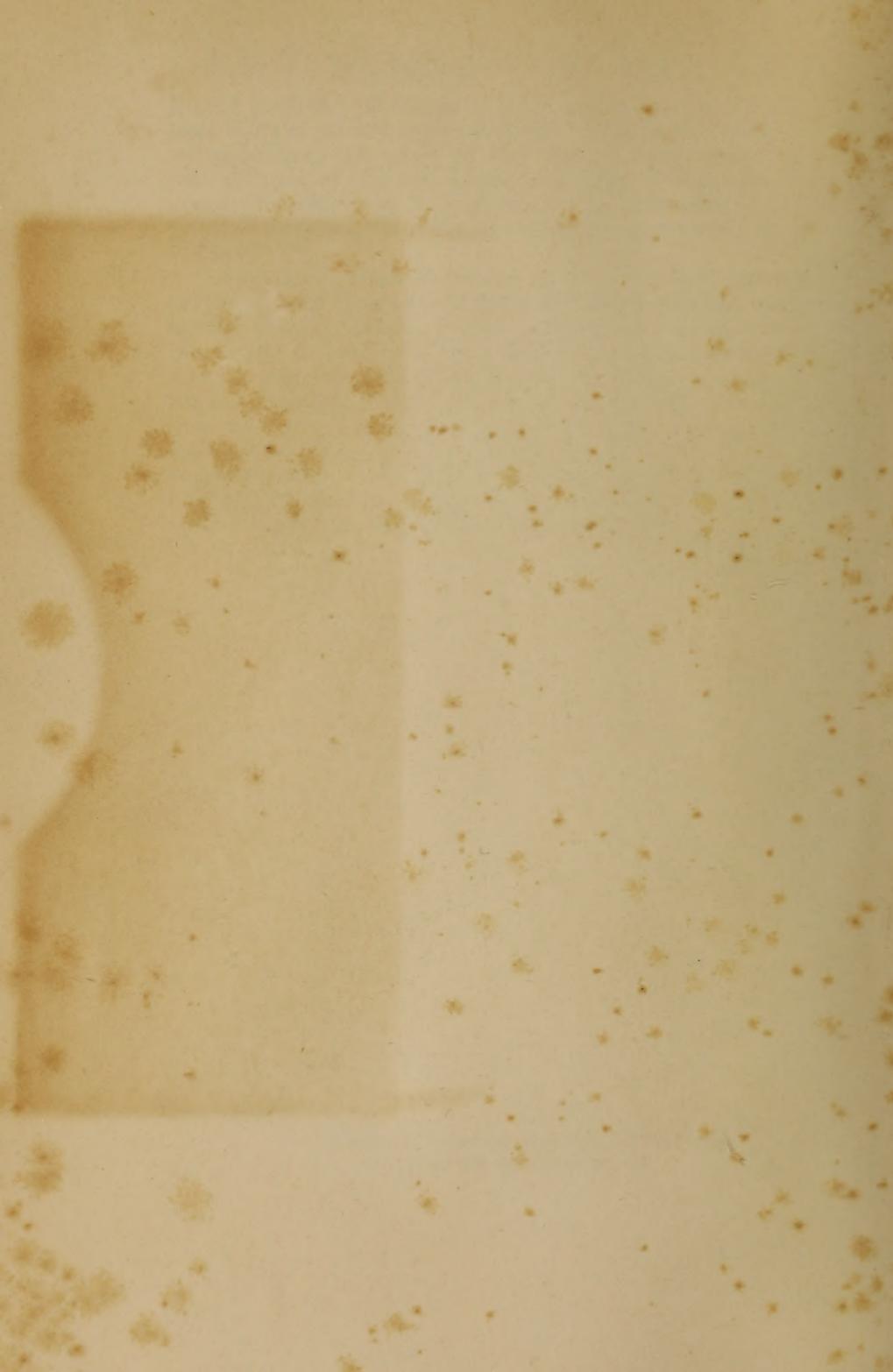
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it must conduct.' It means to gauge and test our own career in the light of its moral and spiritual issues. And as God teaches us this, we understand the secret of true wisdom. For wisdom lies in a just estimate of the real values of things. 'What shall it profit a man?' remains the final question. As Plato said, in one of his mystical sentences, 'It is the art of measurement which would save the soul.'

5. Our Lord Himself, on one striking occasion, numbered His own days, when He made answer to the Scribes who had warned Him against Herod: 'Behold, I cast out devils and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' He could say of a truth, concerning His whole living and dying: 'I know whence I come and whither I go.' Faithfully and patiently He applied His heart unto eternal wisdom, day by day, without hastening and without resting, until the end—when He was able to testify, 'I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.' Let His beauty, O Lord our God, be upon us; and establish Thou the work of His hands upon us: yea, the work of His hands establish Thou it.

T. H. DARLOW.
The Upward Calling, p. 346.





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